



Washington State Fusion Center INFOCUS



MONDAY — 15 AUG 2022

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Events, Opportunities

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HEADLINE	08/15 Putin seeks closer NKorea ties
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/08/15/Vladimir-Putin-Kim-Jong-Un-KCNA-letter-closer-ties/1891660540993/
GIST	<p>SEOUL, Aug. 15 (UPI) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin told North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that the two countries will "continue to expand" ties, the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Monday.</p> <p>Putin made the comments in a letter to Kim on the occasion of North Korea's Liberation Day holiday, which commemorates the defeat of Japan in World War II and the end of Tokyo's colonial rule of Korea.</p> <p>The two countries, both of which are under punishing international sanctions, "would continue to expand the comprehensive and constructive bilateral relations with common efforts," Putin said in his letter, according to KCNA.</p> <p>Putin added that the closer bond "would entirely conform with the interests of the peoples of the two countries and contribute to strengthening the security and stability of the Korean peninsula and the whole of the Northeastern Asian region."</p> <p>The North Korean leader responded with a letter of his own, saying that relations "based on comradely friendship and militant unity would grow stronger in all fields," KCNA said.</p> <p>Kim wished Putin "big success in his responsible work for defending the sovereignty and interests of the country and people and achieving the prosperity of the country."</p> <p>North Korea has publicly expressed its support for Russia's invasion of Ukraine, issuing statements blaming NATO expansion and America's "hegemonic policy" for causing the crisis.</p> <p>Last month, North Korea officially recognized the pro-Russian breakaway republics of Donetsk and Lugansk in Ukraine, becoming only the second country outside of Russia to do so.</p> <p>Kiev responded by severing diplomatic ties with Pyongyang.</p> <p>Kim added that relations between Moscow and Pyongyang have already been "put on a new high stage in the common front for frustrating the hostile forces' military threat and provocation."</p> <p>He did not specify who the "hostile forces" are, but North Korea frequently uses the term to describe the United States and South Korea. The regime has amped up its bellicose rhetoric against both in recent weeks.</p> <p>In late July, Kim suggested that he was prepared to use his country's nuclear arsenal in a military clash with the United States and threatened to "annihilate" South Korea. Last week, Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of the leader, repeated accusations that Seoul had been the source of a COVID-19 outbreak in the North and warned that Pyongyang would respond by "not only exterminating the virus but also wiping out the [S]outh Korean authorities."</p> <p>Pyongyang has conducted 18 rounds of weapons tests in 2022, including its first launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles in almost five years. Washington and Seoul have assessed that North Korea is fully prepared to conduct its seventh nuclear test at any time.</p> <p>For its part, Russia joined China in vetoing a U.S.-led U.N. Security Council resolution to impose additional sanctions on North Korea in May, highlighting a growing geopolitical divide.</p>

HEADLINE	08/15 Heavy shelling Ukraine Donetsk region
SOURCE	https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/russian-forces-pound-ukraines-donetsk-region-2022-08-15/
GIST	<p>KYIV, Aug 15 (Reuters) - Ukrainian forces reported heavy Russian shelling and attempts to advance on several towns in the eastern region of Donetsk that has become a key focus of the near six-month war, but said they had repelled many of the attacks.</p> <p>The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces also reported Russian shelling of more than a dozen towns on the southern front - particularly the Kherson region, mainly controlled by Russian forces, but where Ukrainian troops are steadily capturing territory.</p> <p>Much attention has been focused on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine amid fears of a catastrophe over renewed shelling in recent days that Russia and Ukraine blame on each other.</p> <p>U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has called for the establishment of a demilitarised zone and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has warned Russian soldiers who shoot at Europe's largest nuclear power station or use it as a base to shoot from that they will become a "special target" of Ukrainian forces.</p> <p>The Zaporizhzhia plant dominates the south bank of a vast reservoir on the Dnipro River. Ukrainian forces controlling the towns and cities on the opposite bank have come under intense bombardment from the Russian-held side.</p> <p>The International Atomic Energy Agency, which seeks to inspect the plant, has warned of a nuclear disaster unless fighting stops. Nuclear experts fear fighting might damage the plant's spent fuel pools or reactors.</p> <p>Zelenskiy said Ukraine had many times proposed different formats to the Russian leadership for peace talks, without progress.</p> <p>"So we have to defend ourselves, we have to answer every form of terror, every instance of shelling - the fierce shelling which does not let up for a single day," he said in video remarks late on Sunday.</p> <p>FIGHTING IN EAST, SOUTH</p> <p>Kyiv has said for weeks it is planning a counteroffensive to recapture Zaporizhzhia and neighbouring Kherson province, the largest part of the territory Russia seized after its Feb. 24 invasion and still holds.</p> <p>Ukraine's military command said early on Sunday that Russian soldiers had continued unsuccessfully to attack Ukrainian positions near Avdiivka, which, since 2014, has become one of the outposts of Ukrainian forces near Donetsk.</p> <p>Ukrainian military expert Oleg Zhdanov said the situation was particularly difficult in Avdiivka and nearby towns, such as Pisky.</p> <p>"We have insufficient artillery power in place and our forces are asking for more support to defend Pisky," he said in a video posted online. "But the town is basically under Ukrainian control."</p> <p>In the neighbouring Russian-occupied region of Luhansk, in the grounds below an abandoned, charred apartment block, Lilia Ai-Talatini, 48, watched on as her mother's body was exhumed from a makeshift grave to be taken to a cemetery for a proper burial.</p> <p>Ai-Talatini told Reuters how it had taken her 10 days to reach her parents' apartment, which was on the Russian held-side of the town of Rubizhne, during heavy fighting there in March.</p>

"Mother was already dying ... her hands were blue, her complexion was sallow, there were circles under her eyes," she said. "The next day mother passed away."

An official with the Luhansk People's Republic, a statelet set up by pro-Moscow separatists, said a team had been working in Rubizhne for 10 days and exhumed 104 sets of remains.

"It's clear that shrapnel wounds predominate, but there are also bullet wounds," Anna Soroka said, estimating there were 500 unofficial graves in the city.

Reuters could not independently verify the battlefield accounts.

Russia calls its invasion of Ukraine a "special military operation" to demilitarise and "denazify" its smaller neighbour, while Ukraine and its Western allies regard Moscow's actions as a war of aggression.

The conflict has pushed Moscow-Washington relations to a low point, with Russia warning it may sever ties.

Having been largely isolated on the global diplomatic stage, Russia has been gaining more sympathy from China, whose own ties with Washington have nosedived due to tensions over Taiwan.

And on Monday, North Korean state media said Russian President Vladimir Putin told leader Kim Jong Un the two countries would expand "comprehensive and constructive" ties.

In July, North Korea recognised as independent states the Russian-backed breakaway "people's republics" of Donetsk and Luhansk, and officials raised the prospect of its workers being sent there to help in construction and other labour.

Ukraine immediately severed ties with Pyongyang over the move.

GRAIN SHIPS

Amid the fighting, more ships carrying Ukrainian grain left or prepared to do so as part of a deal struck late last month to ease a global food crisis.

An Ethiopia-bound cargo, the first since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, was getting ready to leave in the next few days, while sources said the first grain ship to leave Ukraine under a U.N. deal was nearing Syria.

"The world needs the food of Ukraine," Marianne Ward, the deputy country director of the World Food Programme, told reporters. "This is the beginning of what we hope are normal operations for the hungry people of the world."

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HEADLINE	08/14 Seattle-area rents leave no easy choices
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/business/real-estate/skyrocketing-seattle-area-rents-leave-tenants-with-no-easy-choices/
GIST	<p>Dana Jager knew it was time to start seriously apartment hunting when she read the notice taped to her door in early January — her rent was going up \$367 starting July 1.</p> <p>“I wasn’t in that big of a rush to leave right away,” she said. “It’s just a thought that was forced upon me when they presented that increase.”</p> <p>The 28-year-old single mother has lived in Seattle’s Lake City neighborhood nearly her entire life. For the past eight years, Jager and her 10-year-old son have shared a one-bedroom unit there at The Gladstone Apartments. Jager’s job at Fred Meyer nets her enough to make ends meet and pay just over</p>

\$983 a month in rent, but she said a 37% rent increase would leave them with almost nothing left over at the end of the month.

Tenants in Seattle and across the country face rents that are [rising faster than their wages](#). At the same time, landlords are also feeling the squeeze. They have few other options besides rent increases to address the financial hangover from the pandemic-era eviction moratorium, in addition to surging maintenance costs from a shortage of skilled trades workers.

Median one-bedroom rent in Seattle was \$1,710 in July — 9% more than a year ago, according to data from Apartment List. Paychecks haven't kept up with rents though, and a [new study](#) shows that a minimum-wage worker in King and Snohomish counties would have to put in 90 hours a week to afford rent.

[Common guidance](#) is that housing should not surpass 30% of monthly income to leave room for other costs and savings. Currently, [4 in 10](#) renters in the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue area pay more than 30% of their income in rent, and 1 in 5 spend more than half, according to the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies.

Neighborhoods outside Seattle's core and cities to the north and south — once considered affordable — sustained the fastest price growth during the past decade. Average rents for one-bedroom apartments in Everett rose by 90% from 2012 to 2022, according to data from CoStar, a commercial real estate data analytics company. Rents in North Seattle, which includes Lake City, jumped 45% in the same time frame.

Eviction cases in King County rose sharply after Seattle's moratorium ended in February, according to [data](#) from the Housing Justice Project, but they still trail behind pre-pandemic levels. In July, 233 evictions were filed in King County, the highest monthly number since the pandemic began, but still below the 373 filed each month [in 2019](#).

Josh Alhadeff, president of the firm DSB Investments that manages The Gladstone, said that the company doesn't want to push people out, but that some rent increases are necessary to help pay for rising operational costs, such as maintenance.

The pandemic ushered a movement of white collar workers from Seattle to the suburbs after many companies allowed employees to work remotely, said Elliott Krivenko, a data analyst for CoStar. Those working from home sought apartments and homes with more space that fit their budget.

Housing providers blame rent increases on a shortage of units and a surplus of renters. The number of Seattle tenants surged, with renters [bypassing](#) homeowners in 2019 for the first time since 1910, according to census data.

They also point to lost rent because of eviction moratoriums and rent freezes during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I think what a lot of people forget is that there's a large amount of service that goes into providing housing," said Sean Flynn, president of the Rental Housing Association of Washington. He emphasized that a shortage of skilled trades workers has driven up maintenance costs, and rising interest rates and property taxes make property management even more expensive.

Standing together to fight rent hikes

At least three of Jager's neighbors moved out because they couldn't afford the rent increases, she said. Those who stayed behind decided to organize and push back. Residents argued the building wasn't worth what the property managers were asking them to pay. Jager and at least five other tenants cited slow maintenance responses to clogged drains, mold in some units and broken balcony panels on the building's upper level (which tenants and organizers said they fixed).

With the help of the Puget Sound Tenants Union, a Seattle-based grassroots advocacy group, the residents started a campaign. They circulated a petition protesting the rent increases in light of the building's condition. Of the 28 occupied units, 24 of them signed on. They organized "phone zaps," where they'd constantly call DSB Investments and Alhadeff's personal cellphone.

When the Bellevue-based company assumed management of The Gladstone in October 2020, the building was in "very, very bad shape," Alhadeff said.

"A lot of those units, when we took them over, were vacant, and we had to go through and do everything to them," he said.

DSB owns and manages at least 20 properties in the Seattle metro area, employing eight maintenance workers. While the company says on its website that it "owns the properties we manage," Alhadeff said that's not the case with The Gladstone. [Property records](#) indicate it's owned by Gladstone Holdings LLC, and Alhadeff declined to say who the members of that corporation are.

"Just a box"

The Gladstone was everything Jager needed it to be when she first moved in. Her paycheck from McDonald's covered the \$725 monthly rent, and her then-2-year-old didn't require much space of his own. Today, the boy's lofted bed occupies a corner of the living room, while a couch and a TV perched atop a bookshelf full of old VCR tapes and DVDs take up most of the remaining space. The bathroom is so small that the door has to be completely shut in order to access the bathtub and shower.

The persistent maintenance problems make Jager's cramped apartment even less pleasant, she said. The drains in her bathtub and bathroom sink clog every three to four months, bubbling up with turbid water and hair, she said. Residents were instructed in their leases to not use unclogging chemicals like Drano. Recently, she bought a declogging tool so she doesn't have to wait for the maintenance team, Jager said.

Dark streaks mar the white ceiling paint, and white fuzz populates the backs of her dressers. Jager said her apartment gets poor ventilation, especially in the winter when she can't open the windows. She runs box fans constantly, year-round. She said she's had to discard clothing and luggage because of mold damage in her closet.

Alhadeff told The Times in an email that "since taking over management [of The Gladstone] about eighteen months ago, DSB's maintenance team has quickly addressed and abated any mold issues that have been reported."

Jager's son spends as little time in the apartment as possible, instead going over to friends' houses or down to the park. He never invites his friends over.

"It's horrible," he said of the apartment. "It's literally just a box."

The \$983 in monthly rent is manageable, yet still too much for a building that "looks like a motel" rather than a home, Jager said. The proposed \$367 rent hike would mean that even though she works more than 40 hours a week as an assistant store manager at Fred Meyer, she'd barely have any money left to save for emergencies, let alone send her son to his beloved sports camps and Little League games.

The Puget Sound Tenants Union's original goal was to get yearlong leases for all tenants at their current rates, said Jennifer Cheng, an organizer with the Seattle-based tenant advocacy organization. She asserted that the city's ["Carl Haglund" law](#) should protect tenants from rent increases until the landlord addresses violations of Seattle's [Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance](#). For example, management should address the poor ventilation that would allow mold to grow, she argued. City inspectors will have to examine the units to determine if there are code violations. Tenants in multiple apartments submitted complaints to the city in early July, although no citations have been issued. City inspectors visited The Gladstone twice in August, but only one resident answered the door and

permitted an inspection, a city spokesperson said. They'll try contacting the residents one more time before closing the complaints, and they'll still inspect the units of residents who call the number on the business cards they left in tenants' doors.

Inspectors will visit Jager's unit Monday.

Alhadeff said he didn't personally decide the amounts of the January rent increases, and he only became aware that residents were organizing in late June. Property managers determine rent rates using data from comparable units in the neighborhood, he said.

"We work with all our residents," Alhadeff said, adding that tenants could choose to move into one of the refurbished units, albeit at the higher rate. He said DSB's property managers try to help tenants find rental assistance, like Seattle's new [displacement assistance program](#).

Annual rent increases for market-rate rentals usually keep pace with inflation at about 3%, said Flynn of the Rental Housing Association. But for buildings like The Gladstone that kept rates steady for years because of lack of upkeep, eventually new property management takes over, performs overdue maintenance and hikes rates closer to market level to try to salvage the building. The resulting rent increases can feel shocking.

"It's a super difficult problem for both the ownership group and the tenants," Flynn said. "Eventually, someone's got to pay that piper."

Some residents have been able to work with the property manager for lower rent increases.

When Bonnie Dawson received her notice in January, she didn't know how she would afford the extra cost. Having only lived at The Gladstone for a year, her combined rent and utilities totaled \$1,280 already. The new price she'd have to pay, which was closer to \$1,400, would be too much for her fixed Social Security income.

"I just wanted to cry," Dawson said. "I'm barely making it — I'm just a senior citizen."

Dawson is currently negotiating with the property manager to get her rent closer to \$1,310 — any higher and she wouldn't be able to afford her medications, including two inhalers that cost \$45 apiece. She's still hoping to move into senior housing next year when she turns 70.

To stay, or to go?

Renters across the region face similar rent increases to those that the Gladstone residents have experienced. Tenants who don't push back against rent increases have two options — move out, or stay put.

John Tozzi, 57, who works at Seattle Children's hospital as a program coordinator, couldn't move to avoid the rent increase at his Capitol Hill apartment near 23rd Avenue and Madison Street.

He and his husband, Chuck Rowland, feared they might end up homeless when they received a "pay or vacate" notice in mid-May. They've lived in their building for almost eight years but fell four months behind on rent in 2021 because of unemployment during the pandemic. The lease on their two-bedroom apartment was set to expire in July, and Tozzi said the property management company wouldn't renew it until they paid.

Even if they caught up on payments and renewed, their monthly rent would increase by \$200 to \$2,700.

After receiving the notice, the couple scrambled to try finding a more affordable place. They'd burned through their savings while they were unemployed, and since Rowland was unable to work at the time because of health issues, Tozzi's income couldn't cover all their costs.

“Here I am making \$70,000 a year, and we’re hitting the food banks because we can’t support ourselves on that amount of money,” Tozzi said. “It’s insane.”

Eventually, they decided the only feasible choice was to take a loan from Tozzi’s sister, pay off the overdue rent and stay put. Now that Rowland is healthy again and recently started a new job, they hope to pay off their debts in two years and rebuild their credit.

“I just never dreamed it would get this bad,” Tozzi said.

Dreams of a bigger, better home

Jager knew she and her son would leave The Gladstone eventually. She figured when he was 12, they’d find a place where he could have his own room. It wasn’t until the rent hike that she started earnestly looking at other places.

They won’t move until after he finishes fifth grade next year. She’s eyeing a two-bedroom apartment in Shoreline’s Richmond Beach neighborhood, where one of her colleagues lives.

Jager isn’t sure what will happen with her Gladstone rent. Ideally, she’d negotiate a smaller increase to just \$1,050 a month for her current place. But if DSB won’t work with her, she’s mentally prepared herself to swallow the price and move to a renovated unit.

“If I’m going to be paying \$1,350, I want a \$1,350 apartment,” she said. “Don’t make it so I’m stuck wondering where the heck my money is going when it’s still a complete rundown dump — because that’s what it is.”

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HEADLINE	08/14 Russia fails to pay reservists, laborers
SOURCE	https://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2022/08/14/fails-pay-military-reservists-civilian-laborers-ukraine/5201660500132/
GIST	<p>Aug. 14 (UPI) -- Russia is reportedly failing to pay military reservists and volunteer units fighting in Ukraine as well as Russian laborers brought into occupied regions.</p> <p>Russian reservists and volunteer soldiers have reported that Russian authorities have failed to pay them, according to an analysis Saturday from the Institute for the Study of War, a think tank based in Washington, D.C., which cited Radio Free Europe's news outlet Idel.Realii.</p> <p>The recruits told Idel.Realii they have no experience but are being tapped as commanding officers leading at the company level or higher.</p> <p>Russia has also failed to provide sufficient food, ammunition or cigarettes to soldiers, the recruits claimed to Idel.Realii.</p> <p>Russia has also failed to provide for the funeral arrangements of volunteer soldiers killed in action and those who have returned home from Ukraine report having felt "deceived."</p> <p>The Russian independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta reported Friday that Russian officials have detained contract soldiers who refuse to fight in special detention camps in occupied Ukraine.</p> <p>The Intelligence Department at Ukraine's Defense Ministry posted an audio clip to Telegram on Sunday purporting to be of a Russian soldier in the Kharkiv region.</p> <p>In the clip, the soldier allegedly talks about the state of recruitment in Russia's armed forces including the lifting of recruitment restrictions and notes the absence of people from Crimea, according to the intelligence officials.</p>

The Institute for the Study of War also noted that Russian-backed occupation administrations are "likely experiencing internal challenges" that are hindering their regimes and impairing the ability of occupation officials to conduct reconstruction projects in the Donbas region of Ukraine.

MediaZona, another independent media outlet in Russia, [posted a video Saturday](#) in which workers from Russian water services company Mosvodokanal claimed they were never paid for work in the Luhansk province of Ukraine, which with Donetsk, makes up the larger Donbas region.

Petro Andryushchenko, a mayoral adviser in Mariupol, claimed in a post to Telegram on Saturday that Russian authorities brought bricklayers and electricians from St. Petersburg to Mariupol who were promised twice their salaries in Russian cities but were never paid.

"The occupiers bring workers from Russia to work in the occupied territories. They promise high salaries, but in fact they 'throw away' money," Andryushchenko said.

"Local residents are not hired for these jobs, they are second-class people."

Andryushchenko said that the laborers work without contracts and have been "abandoned" by Russia.

"If this is the attitude towards 'their own' then what can be said about local residents," Andryushchenko said.

"The majority of Mariupol residents are unemployed. And those who managed to get a job are not paid wages. Because of this, the employees of the city water supply company have been protesting for several days, because they are used to decent pay for their work."

The Institute for the Study of War said in its analysis that the pervasiveness of imported Russian labor "suggests that Russian occupation authorities are struggling to persuade or forcibly coerce meaningful numbers of Ukrainian residents to work on reconstruction projects."

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HEADLINE	08/15 Severe drought hits Northeast farmers
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2022-08-15/severe-drought-hits-northeast-farmers
GIST	<p>PROVIDENCE, R.I. — Vermont farmer Brian Kemp is used to seeing the pastures at Mountain Meadows Farm grow more slowly in the hot late summer, but this year the grass is at a standstill.</p> <p>That's "very nerve-racking" when you're grazing 600 to 700 cattle, said Kemp, who manages an organic beef farm in Sudbury, Vt. He describes the weather lately as inconsistent, which he attributes to a changing climate.</p> <p>"I don't think there is any normal anymore," Kemp said.</p> <p>The effects of climate change have been felt throughout the northeastern U.S. with rising sea levels, heavy precipitation and storm surges causing flooding and coastal erosion. But this summer has brought another extreme: a severe drought that is making lawns crispy and has farmers begging for steady rain. The heavy, short rainfall brought by the occasional thunderstorm tends to run off, not soak into the ground.</p> <p>Water supplies are low or dry, and many communities are restricting nonessential outdoor water use. Fire departments are combating more brush fires and crops are growing poorly.</p> <p>Providence, R.I., had less than half an inch of rainfall during the third-driest July on record, and Boston had 0.6 of an inch in its fourth-driest July on record, according to the National Weather Service office in Norton, Mass. Rhode Island's governor issued a statewide drought advisory Tuesday with recommendations to reduce water use. The north end of the Hoppin Hill Reservoir in Massachusetts is dry, forcing local water restrictions.</p>

Officials in Maine said drought conditions began there in 2020, with occasional improvements in areas since. In Auburn, Maine, local firefighters helped a dairy farmer fill a water tank for his cows when his well went too low in late July and temperatures hit 90. About 50 dry wells have been reported to state authorities since 2021, according to the state's dry-well survey.

The continuing trend toward drier summers in the Northeast can certainly be attributed to the impact of climate change, since warmer temperatures lead to greater evaporation and drying of soils, climate scientist Michael Mann said. But, he said, the dry weather can be punctuated by extreme rainfall events since a warmer atmosphere holds more moisture, which means that when conditions are conducive to rainfall, there's more of it in short bursts.

Mann said there's evidence shown by his research at Penn State University that climate change is leading to a "stuck jet stream" pattern. That means huge tentacles of the jet stream, or air current, get stuck in place, locking in extreme weather events that can alternately be associated with extreme heat and drought in one location and extreme rainfall in another, a pattern that has played out this summer with the heat and drought in the Northeast and extreme flooding in parts of the Midwest, Mann added.

Most of New England is experiencing drought. The U.S. Drought Monitor issued a new map Thursday that shows areas of eastern Massachusetts outside Cape Cod and much of southern and eastern Rhode Island now in extreme, instead of severe, drought.

New England has experienced severe summer droughts before, but experts say it is unusual to have droughts in fairly quick succession since 2016. Massachusetts experienced droughts in 2016, 2017, 2020, 2021 and 2022, which is very likely due to climate change, said Vandana Rao, director of water policy in Massachusetts.

"We hope this is maybe one period of peaking of drought and we get back to many more years of normal precipitation," she said. "But it could just be the beginning of a longer trend."

Rao and other water experts in New England expect the current drought to last for several more months.

"I think we're probably going to be in this for a while and it's going to take a lot," said Ted Diers, assistant director of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services water division. "What we really are hoping for is a wet fall followed by a very snowy winter to really recharge the aquifers and the groundwater."

Rhode Island's principal forest ranger, Ben Arnold, is worried about the drought extending into the fall. That's when people do more yard work, burn brush, use fireplaces and spend time in the woods, increasing the risk of forest fires. The fires this summer have been relatively small, but it takes a lot of time and effort to extinguish them because they are burning into the dry ground, Arnold said.

Hay farmer Milan Adams said one of the fields he's tilling in Exeter, R.I., is powder a foot down. In prior years it rained in the spring. This year, he said, the dryness started in March, and April was so dry he was nervous about his first cut of hay.

"The height of the hay was there, but there was no volume to it. From there, we got a little bit of rain in the beginning of May that kind of shot it up," he said. "We haven't seen anything since."

Farmers are fighting more than the drought: Inflation is driving up the cost of everything, including diesel, equipment parts, fertilizer and pesticides, Adams added.

"It's all through the roof right now," he said. "This is just throwing salt on a wound."

The yield and quality of hay is down in Vermont, too, which means there won't be as much for cows in the winter, said Vermont Agriculture Secretary Anson Tebbetts. The state has roughly 600 dairy farms, a \$2-

	<p>billion-per-year industry. Like Adams, Tebbetts said inflation is driving up prices, which will hurt the farmers who will have to buy feed.</p> <p>Kemp, the president of the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition, is thankful to have supplemental feed from last year, but he knows other farmers who don't have land to put together a reserve and aren't well-stocked. The coalition is trying to help farmers evolve and learn new practices. They added "climate-smart farming" to their mission statement in the spring.</p> <p>"Farming is challenging," Kemp said, "and it's becoming even more challenging as climate change takes place."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Fire crews battle Northern California blazes
SOURCE	https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-08-14/firefighters-continue-to-northern-california-wildfires-amid-persistent-heat
GIST	<p>Firefighters in California's northern forests continued containment Sunday over the massive and deadly McKinney fire in Siskiyou County, but as temperatures headed higher, another large blaze was burning nearby.</p> <p>The Six Rivers fire, burning more than 16,900 acres in Trinity and Humboldt counties, was just 15% contained Sunday, according to fire officials.</p> <p>Meanwhile, another blaze in Yosemite National Park, the Red fire, started in the backcountry on Aug. 4 and was estimated at 250 acres Sunday morning, officials said.</p> <p>Fire officials were braced for a week of blistering heat, as many parts of the state are forecast to wither on multiple days of triple-digit temperatures. "Hot, dry, and windy conditions are increasing, which also increases the potential for new starts," officials noted in an update on the McKinney fire posted Sunday.</p> <p>"We're always mindful of the weather, and the change of" conditions, said Cal Fire spokesman Capt. Chris Bruno. "So the increased temperature is a factor."</p> <p>Still, as of Sunday, the McKinney fire, which claimed the lives of four people, remained 95% contained after burning 60,000 acres. Some evacuation orders had been lifted, but many others remained in effect particularly around Highway 96.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/15 Myanmar convicts Suu Kyi on more charges
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-philanthropy-aung-san-suu-kyi-government-and-politics-65b31bda03227a2bf73e3b26cea32b12
GIST	<p>BANGKOK (AP) — A court in military-ruled Myanmar convicted the country's ousted leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, on more corruption charges on Monday and sentenced her to an additional six years in prison, a legal official said.</p> <p>The trial was held behind closed doors, with no access for media or the public, and her lawyers were forbidden by a gag order from revealing information about the proceedings.</p> <p>In the four corruption cases decided Monday, Suu Kyi was alleged to have abused her position to rent public land at below market prices and to have built a residence with donations meant for charitable purposes. She received sentences of three years for each of the four counts, but the sentences for three of them will be served concurrently, giving her a total of six more years in prison.</p> <p>She denied all the charges, and her lawyers are expected to appeal.</p>

	<p>She already had been sentenced to 11 years in prison on sedition, corruption and other charges at earlier trials after the military ousted her elected government and detained her in February 2021.</p> <p>Analysts say the numerous charges against her and her allies are an attempt to legitimize the military's seizure of power while eliminating her from politics before the military holds an election it has promised for next year.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Other reason why food prices rising
SOURCE	https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/14/the-other-reason-why-food-prices-are-rising.html
GIST	<p>The United Nations' worst-case scenario calculation is that global food prices will rise by an additional 8.5% by 2027.</p> <p>More expensive fertilizers are contributed to those higher costs, with some fertilizers spiking 300% since September 2020, according to the American Farm Bureau.</p> <p>"Last year [fertilizer] was around \$270 per ton and now it's over \$1,400 per ton," Meagan Kaiser, of Kaiser Family Farms and farmer-director of the United Soybean Board, told NBC's "Nightly News with Lester Holt."</p> <p>"It's scary. It turns my stomach a little bit to think about the amount of risk that our family farm is taking right now."</p> <p>Farmers are finding themselves forced to pass some of those costs along to customers, resulting in higher grocery prices.</p> <p>Fertilizer is essential for crops. Without fertilizer, plants may not get the nourishment they need to result in the yields necessary to meet global demand.</p> <p>According to the International Fertilizer Association, we would only be able to feed about half of the global population without fertilizer.</p> <p>Farmers are trying to adjust to this new normal. When surveyed in spring 2022 about what they intended to plant, farmers said they were turning to more soybean, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture data, or a record 91 million acres of the legume. That may be because legumes don't require as much fertilizer as corn to grow.</p> <p>Spikes in fertilizer prices started when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.</p> <p>"It's amazing how dependent the world is on fertilizers from the region that we're talking about Russia and Ukraine," Johanna Mendelson Forman, adjunct professor at American University's School of International Service, told CNBC.</p> <p>The region is responsible for at least 28% of the world's fertilizer exports, including nitrogen-, potassium- and phosphorus-based fertilizers, according to Morgan Stanley.</p> <p>Also factoring into price spikes are rising natural gas costs.</p> <p>"There's a direct relationship with what we're seeing in fuel prices and fertilizer prices," Jo Handelsman, director of the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, told CNBC.</p> <p>That's because fossil fuels are used in the manufacturing process of fertilizers — and is one of the reasons that they can contribute to climate change.</p>

	<p>Plus, if farmers overuse fertilizers, the chemicals can run off into waterways, causing environmental damage, pollution and illnesses.</p> <p>“I’m not saying that the fertilizer is bad ... our soil naturally has nutrients,” Ronald Vargas, secretary of the Global Soil Partnership for the United Nations. “If [soil] is naturally depleted, then you need to find a way to make those nutrients available.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Tomato-based products water crisis threat
SOURCE	https://finance.yahoo.com/news/spaghetti-sauce-under-threat-water-124539175.html
GIST	<p>California leads the world in production of processing tomatoes — the variety that gets canned and used in commercial kitchens to make some of the most popular foods. The problem is the worst drought in 1,200 years is forcing farmers to grapple with a water crisis that’s undermining the crop, threatening to further push up prices from salsa to spaghetti sauce.</p> <p>“We desperately need rain,” Mike Montna, head of the California Tomato Growers Association, said in an interview. “We are getting to a point where we don’t have inventory left to keep fulfilling the market demand.”</p> <p>Lack of water is shrinking production in a region responsible for a quarter of the world’s output, which is having an impact on prices of tomato-based products. Gains in tomato sauce and ketchup are outpacing the rise in US food inflation, which is at its highest in 43 years, with drought and higher agricultural inputs to blame. With California climate-change forecasts calling for hotter and drier conditions, the outlook for farmers is uncertain.</p> <p>“It’s real tough to grow a tomato crop right now,” Montna said. “On one side you have the drought impacting costs because you don’t have enough water to grow all your acres, and then you have the farm inflation side of it with fuel and fertilizer costs shooting up.”</p> <p>California restrictions limiting groundwater use and soaring costs for labor, fuel and fertilizer have caused headaches for producers such as Woolf Farming. It costs the Fresno County-based grower and processor around \$4,800 an acre to grow and harvest a tomato crop these days compared with \$2,800 a decade ago, according to Rick Blankenship, vice president of farming operations. Most of the increases have been in the last two years. This season’s bounty costs more and delivers less.</p> <p>“Yields are way off this year,” Blankenship said in an interview. “Coupled with drought, we’ve had high temperatures and that in itself creates an issue where the tomatoes are so hot that they just don’t size properly — so you have a lot of tomatoes on a plant, but they are smaller.”</p> <p>Getting higher value for crops from the field is usually an incentive for farmers, yet this season’s negotiated rate of \$105 a ton for the tomatoes — an all-time high — may not be enough to overcome the industry’s challenges.</p> <p>“You would think that it was a home run for growers, but in reality the input costs have gone up so much that the potential profit was all gobbled up,” Blankenship said.</p> <p>The water woes have led to crop shifting as growers try to gauge what commodity will bring the biggest returns. Bruce Rominger, a fifth-generation farmer, slashed rice sowing by 90% to make room for tomatoes. He hopes to turn a profit on the 800 acres of tomatoes he began harvesting in July—though it’s a gamble.</p> <p>“It’s a high-risk crop and our yields so far are below average,” Rominger said, noting that excessive heat, lack of water and mid-April frost took its toll.</p>

And it's only getting worse. Higher temperatures will shrink supply of processing tomatoes in key regions in the next few decades, with the US, Italy and China expected to decline 6% by 2050, according to an academic study published in Nature Food. Increasing heat and water constraints may make it especially tough for California and Italy to maintain current production levels, the June report said.

The California crop has been below the recent production peak of 14.4 million tons in 2015 for the past six years, and 2022 is shaping up to continue the trend, according to US Department of Agriculture data. The industry expects this year's harvest to fall below the USDA's 11.7 million tons estimate.

"Despite low supply and a substantial increase in price, contracted production has dropped significantly compared to the beginning of 2022," the USDA said in its May report on California's processing tomato crop, noting that water availability is the main issue facing producers.

"There are simply not enough acres of processing tomatoes being planted this year to ensure that everybody gets their full supply," said R. Greg Pruett, sales and energy manager for Ingomar Packing Co., one of the world's biggest tomato processors. "The water is either too expensive or just not available at any cost."

Such pressures are being reflected in Ingomar's processed products. Tomato paste prices for clients of the company, which sells to some of the largest US food brands, are up as much as 80% from a year ago. With inventories dropping to critically low levels, though, supply isn't available for everyone.

"If you are looking for a significant amount of tomato paste and you haven't already contracted it then you aren't going to get it no matter what the price is," Pruett said in a phone interview. "It's just not there."

Since tomato-based products are hard to substitute, demand isn't especially sensitive to price changes. Still, it's an added cost for consumers. The price of tomato sauce in the four weeks ended July 10 is up 17% from a year ago, while ketchup is 23% higher, according to market research firm IRI.

"There is obviously a point where that relationship is going to break down if frozen pizzas and pasta sauce and other staple items get priced to the point where the average consumer wants to decide to do something else," Pruett said.

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HEADLINE	08/14 History of fatwa: legal opinion in Islamic law
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2022/08/14/salman-rushdie-fatwa-history/
GIST	<p>After the stabbing of author Salman Rushdie during a Friday event in western New York, key questions about the suspect — who was charged with attempted murder on Saturday — remain unanswered. While the alleged assailant's motives have not been confirmed, the attack on Rushdie's life follows decades of threats of violence against the author and his associates, motivated by a fatwa that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued in 1989, when he was Iran's supreme leader. On Sunday, Rushdie was recovering from injuries and had been taken off a ventilator, according to his agent.</p> <p>The fatwa, which ordered Muslims around the world to kill Rushdie, was issued in response to Rushdie's 1988 novel "The Satanic Verses," which some readers found blasphemous for its depiction of Islam. Since then, there have been attempts to blow up stores selling his book and violent demonstrations around the world to protest the novel.</p> <p>The fatwa against Rushdie is one of the most well-known in the world, Islamic legal scholars say, and it brought the term to the West. But they say it has also created ignorance around the term's true meaning, and a false equivalence of the word "fatwa" with "death sentence."</p> <p>Origins and Rushdie</p>

In Islamic law, a fatwa is a “legal opinion on a matter that is raised by a constituent” to a mufti, a Muslim legal authority, according to Lama Abu-Odeh, a Georgetown University Law Center professor.

“It’s neither a judge nor a lawyer, but a person who issues legal opinions,” she said. A fatwa’s ultimate aim is to provide an answer to a legal question in Islam, and states or individuals may follow the opinion’s findings — but they are not obligatory for all Muslims.

Abu-Odeh gave the example of a Muslim who might seek a fatwa from a mufti when deciding whether to consume apple cider that has been fermented.

“You might request a fatwa,” she said, “if it’s unclear to you whether that’s alcoholic or not.”

She stressed that it is an individual’s decision whether to obey the fatwa.

Since the [early Islamic period](#) in the 7th century, fatwas have been issued on a host of religious legal matters, including ethical questions surrounding marriage or prayer habits. The Islamic body of fatwas has been developed in the centuries since, and in the digital age they have evolved with social media.

Khomeini, given the religious authority in accordance with Shi’a Islam, issued the fatwa against Rushdie, said Abu-Odeh. After it was announced, extremist groups set a multimillion-dollar bounty on Rushdie’s life. Iran supported the directive to assassinate the author [until 1998](#), when its president, Mohammad Khatami, said the country would neither “support nor hinder” assassination attempts.

Abu-Odeh explained that a modern government often grants the status of a mufti to someone who can then issue fatwas. But there are also emergent Islamic movements that have muftis, she said, “because usually Islamic movements arise out of dissent to the official state.”

Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (ISIS) have issued their own fatwas, such as orders concerning [fasting](#) and power blackouts during Ramadan, reported Arabic newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat and the nonprofit news outlet New Humanitarian. But, [NPR reported](#), Muslim clerics have also issued fatwas against ISIS, saying the extremist group’s interpretations of Islam are incorrect.

Fatwas in the West

In the West, a fatwa is often equated with “death sentence” in the wake of Khomeini’s order to assassinate Rushdie, Abu-Odeh said.

Intisar Rabb, the director of Harvard Law School’s Program in Islamic Law, said Khomeini’s fatwa against Rushdie has brought ignorance about the practice to the West.

“There is no historical instance or basis for calling on members of the general public to exercise vigilante justice to put someone to death for statements and, for that matter, for someone to follow such directives.” Other acts of violence toward those who have portrayed Islam in ways that some of its followers find offensive have made the violent association persist, said Abu-Odeh.

Fatwas in the digital age

The [rise of the internet](#) has also changed how fatwas are issued, as websites have sprung up that issue fatwas to Muslims on religious questions they have. Many are English-only websites that cater to the vast Muslim diaspora that does not speak Arabic, and some are operated by Muslim leaders such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an Islamic religious scholar who founded IslamOnline.net, which offers information about religious rulings.

Other media also issue fatwas. In Egypt, Abu-Odeh and Rabb said, there are television programs and radio shows in which Muslim viewers call in and request fatwas from muftis about a host of problems they are experiencing related to Islam, which have nothing to do with violence or death. But the ability for “televised fatwas” to be issued [has been regulated](#), according to the Middle East Monitor.

Rabb also gave the example of social media as a platform for fatwas to be issued. “We have other means of communication that evolved right alongside [television and radio],” she said. “And so you get YouTube channels and Facebook and Twitter and Instagram fatwas.” Rabb also pointed to [SHARIAsource](#), Harvard Law School’s digital portal for Islamic law, through which a professor tracked coronavirus-related fatwas, many of which were issued through social media.

The legitimacy of issuing fatwas online has been contested by scholars of Islamic law.

“In the digital age, it’s a mess,” said Khaled Abou El Fadl, an Islamic law professor at the University of California at Los Angeles School of Law. “In the classical system, you only followed the fatwa of a person who you know is duly credentialed, so you were not supposed to follow a fatwa of an unknown. But in the modern age, this has gone completely out of the window. People follow the fatwas of people who have no idea, no training or degrees.”

Abou El Fadl also expressed concern that many modern fatwas announced through social media have no evidence and “are extremely short.” He mentioned the phenomenon of “fatwa shopping,” through which some Muslims surf the internet to look for an opinion that suits them.

Rabb stressed the importance of fatwas being issued through a qualified religious authority. It is “unconscionable and ill-advised for people to follow” fatwas not issued by such authorities, according to Rabb.

To some extent, fatwas have been democratized in the digital age: Countries including Iran have employed platforms such as Telegram in issuing fatwas — a way for government-backed muftis to perform what they used to do in person during early Islam, Rabb said. “In some ways, maybe muftis were the original influencers.”

But after the recent attack on Rushdie, Rabb recalled seeing the word “fatwa” conflated with “death sentence” popping up in Western media despite the everyday use of fatwas in Islamic life.

“This so-called fatwa is actually contrary to the Islamic understanding of them, historically at least,” she said. “It’s an unfortunate fact that this is the thing that actually popularized the term ‘fatwa.’ ”

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HEADLINE	08/15 China’s economy slows unexpectedly
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/aug/15/china-economy-slows-unexpectedly-as-covid-and-property-crisis-bite
GIST	<p>China’s economy unexpectedly slowed in July, with factory and retail activity squeezed by Beijing’s zero-Covid policy and a property crisis, while the central bank surprised markets by cutting key lending rates to revive demand.</p> <p>July’s industrial output grew 3.8% from a year earlier, slightly down from 3.9% in June, data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed. That compared with a 4.6% increase expected by analysts in a Reuters poll.</p> <p>Retail sales, which only turned positive in June, rose 2.7% from a year ago, greatly missing analysts’ forecast for 5% growth and below the 3.1% growth seen in June.</p> <p>The world’s second-biggest economy narrowly escaped a contraction in the June quarter, hobbled by the lockdown of the commercial hub of Shanghai, a deepening downturn in the property market and persistently soft consumer spending.</p> <p>However, risks to growth abound as many Chinese cities, including manufacturing hubs and popular tourist spots, imposed lockdown measures in July after fresh outbreaks of the more transmissible Omicron variant were found.</p>

“The risk of stagflation in the world economy is rising, and the foundation for domestic economic recovery is not yet solid,” the NBS warned in a statement.

The property sector, which has been further [rocked by a mortgage boycott](#) that weighed on buyers’ sentiment, deteriorated in July. Property investment tumbled 12.3% in July, the fastest rate this year, while the drop in new sales deepened to 28.9%.

Chinese policymakers are trying balance shoring up a fragile recovery and eradicating emerging Covid clusters, with the economy expected to miss its official growth target this year – set at about 5.5% – for the first time since 2015.

“All economic data disappointed in July, with the exception being exports. Loan demand from the real economy remained weak, suggesting cautious outlook for the months ahead,” said Nie Wen, a Shanghai-based economist at Hwabao Trust, adding that Covid outbreaks and the heatwaves in July weighed on activity.

“Now it is looking increasingly challenging to even achieve the 5-5.5% growth in the second half.”

The employment situation remained fragile. The nationwide survey-based jobless rate eased slightly to 5.4% in July from 5.5% in June, although youth unemployment stayed stubbornly high, reaching a record 19.9% in July.

In order to prop up growth, the central bank on Monday unexpectedly lowered interest rates on key lending facilities for the second time this year. New yuan loans tumbled by more than expected in July as companies and consumers stayed wary of taking on debt, data showed on Friday.

Wang Jun, economist at Zhongyuan Bank, believe authorities will focus on implementing existing policies, rather than roll out aggressive new stimulus.

“We are now facing a typical liquidity trap problem. No matter how loose the credit supply is, companies and consumers are cautious in taking on more debt,” Wang said. “Some of them are now even paying back their debt in advance. This may herald a recession.”

Fixed asset investment, which Beijing had hoped would drive growth in the second half as exports soften, grew 5.7% in the first seven months of the year from the same period a year earlier, versus a forecast 6.2% rise and down from a 6.1% jump in January-June.

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HEADLINE	08/15 Day 173 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/15/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-173-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Russia’s president, Vladimir Putin, says Russia and North Korea will expand bilateral relations, Pyongyang’s state media reported on Monday. Putin told North Korean leader Kim Jong-un that the two countries would “expand the comprehensive and constructive bilateral relations with common efforts,” Pyongyang’s state media reported on Monday. In a letter to Kim for North Korea’s liberation day, Putin said that closer ties would be in both countries’ interests, and would help strengthen the security and stability of the Korean peninsula and the north-eastern Asian region, North Korea’s KCNA news agency said.• The first UN ship to carry Ukrainian grain for Africa is ready to depart with 23,000 tonnes of wheat. The MV Brave Commander will head to Africa and “Ethiopia will be the last country where the 23,000-tonne cargo of wheat will be delivered”, Ukraine’s infrastructure minister, Oleksandr Kubrakov, said. It will be the first shipment of food aid since Kyiv and Moscow agreed a deal brokered by the UN and Turkey last month to unblock Black Sea grain deliveries.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first ship to depart Ukraine when grain exports resumed was approaching the Syrian port of Tartus on Sunday. The ship left Ukraine two weeks ago but cargo on the Razoni was refused by its original Lebanese buyer, two shipping sources told Reuters. • Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said his forces will target Russian soldiers who shoot at or from the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant. “Every Russian soldier who either shoots at the plant, or shoots using the plant as cover, must understand that he becomes a special target for our intelligence agents, for our special services, for our army,” he said. • A total of 42 countries have called on Russia to immediately withdraw military forces from the plant to safeguard the site, including the US, Japan and the UK, plus the EU. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has warned of a possible nuclear disaster unless fighting stops. • Zelenskiy has warned those with Russian citizenship against being complicit and silent in supporting Putin’s war on Ukraine. “People’s silence approaches the level of complicity. And the rejection of the real fight against evil becomes the assistance to it. Therefore, if you have Russian citizenship and you are silent, it means that you are not fighting, it means that you are supporting it,” he said in his latest national address. • Ukraine’s forces continued to strike at strategic bridges supplying Russian troops holding the city of Kherson, the only major site held by the invaders on the west bank of the Dnieper, including the Antonovsky road bridge and the crossing at the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant upstream. Ukraine said Russian troops who crossed the Dnieper River during their offensive in the southern region were facing growing difficulties after bridges were damaged. • Russia says it has taken control of Udy, a village in the eastern Kharkiv region, according to its latest military briefing. The village has been under heavy shelling by Russian forces. • Russia’s priority over the past week has likely been to reorient units to strengthen its campaign in southern Ukraine, British military intelligence said on Sunday. The UK Ministry of Defence said Russia also appeared to be intensifying attacks on the eastern Donbas front, in what is likely to be an attempt to ensure Ukraine is not able to concentrate forces in the south against Kherson. • Saudi Arabia’s largely state-owned energy firm recorded one of the largest quarterly profits in history, highlighting the colossal profits made by gas and oil-rich nations during the energy crisis linked to the war in Ukraine. Saudi Aramco profits in the three months to the end of June were up 90% to \$48bn (£40bn) to beat the near \$26bn it made a year earlier. Saudi Arabia’s Kingdom Holding invested in Russian energy groups Gazprom, Rosneft and Lukoil between 22 February and 22 March, it said on Twitter on Sunday. • Countries throughout Europe have called for the EU to limit or block short-term Schengen visas for Russian citizens. Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Finland and the Czech Republic all urged new restrictions. Poland is also considering restrictions for Russian tourist visas.
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HEADLINE	08/14 Ukraine: Russia goal is take electricity
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/russia-goal-ukraine-nuclear-plant-take-electricity-11660505601?mod=hp_lead_pos7
GIST	<p>The first sign of danger came when the dwindling crew of Ukrainian technicians running the Zaporizhzhia nuclear-power station noticed that officers from Russia’s state atomic energy company had left the premises without explanation. It was Aug. 5, and Russian soldiers were patrolling the facility.</p> <p>Then, at 2:40 p.m., explosions rocked an electrical switchboard, triggering the shutdown of one of only two remaining power lines running from the plant into southern Ukraine, according to plant workers. Outside, smoke billowed from a crater a few hundred yards from a substation; inside, technicians raced to check the backup diesel generators that would be needed to cool nuclear fuel at risk of overheating in an accident.</p>

It wasn't errant shelling likely to cause nuclear disaster, but a deliberate step in Russia's wider goal: stealing Zaporizhzhia's power by severing its connection to Ukraine's remaining territory, according to Ukrainian leaders, international nuclear-power experts and the plant's staff.

"What Russia is trying to do is the utility equivalent of annexation," said Suriya Jayanti, former energy chief at the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv.

She said the expropriation of such a large supply of cheap and reliable power would ripple through energy markets, leaving Ukraine dependent on the European Union, where electricity prices last week hit record highs. "Russia stealing a nuclear-power plant is a problem for Europe," she said.

In the 10 days since the launch of the attack, [more than a dozen missiles and rockets have struck the grounds around the nuclear plant](#), a 6.7 gigawatt facility that provided about a fifth of Ukraine's electricity before the war.

The blasts have triggered Ukraine's latest and [most perilous nuclear safety crisis](#) since the disaster in 1986 at Chernobyl, and left the International Atomic Energy Agency scrambling for details on conditions inside a plant that it now says is "out of control." The U.S. and the EU have called for a demilitarized zone around the complex. A coalition of 42 countries on Sunday said Russia should withdraw from the power plant and allow Ukrainian authorities to resume control.

Ukraine and Russia are blaming each other for firing shells at the facility, trading alternative narratives about [a plant that Russia has largely closed off](#) from the world since it was captured in the first days of the war. Russian forces controlling the facility have repeatedly cut internet connections around the plant and confiscated the cellphones of Ukrainian workers, who still operate it, during their shifts. The region is now serviced, spottily, by Russian telecoms.

The Kremlin didn't respond to a request for comment.

In a written statement, Rosatom, the Russian state atomic energy company, contested the workers' statements, without elaborating. The company said its staff were present to provide technical advice for the safety of the plant and played no role in its management or defense.

This reconstruction of the battle is based on interviews with plant workers, family members and colleagues who fled to safety. Satellite imagery, pictures taken by drones and cellphone photos and videos captured by bystanders also show the damage the plant has sustained and the deployment of Russian artillery around it and in nearby towns.

Plant workers, backed by European officials and independent nuclear analysts, said the shelling came from Russian positions. They said it serves the Kremlin's broader goal of severing Zaporizhzhia's power connection to Ukraine's remaining territory and rerouting it into Russian-held areas.

According to Energoatom, Ukraine's state nuclear-power company, the strikes were targeted to destroy infrastructure, damaging power transmission lines and, as a result, cutting off power across the south of Ukraine.

The power line struck by shell fire on Aug. 5 was in what Ukrainians call "the gray zone" between Russian and Ukrainian positions and was the third transmission line from the plant damaged in fighting since the war began, leaving just one working line. Ukrainian energy ministry officials said engineers have been trying to repair the damaged line but wouldn't name the location of the strike due to security concerns.

Rerouting power

Several Zaporizhzhia employees said Rosatom technicians have openly discussed rerouting electricity to territories occupied by Russia and eventually back into Russia. Senior Russian officials, including deputy

prime minister Marat Khusnullin, have publicly pledged to integrate Zaporizhzhia with Russia's energy system, or force Ukraine to pay for the electricity.

On Saturday, Mykhailo Podolyak, a top adviser to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, said in a tweet: "The Russian goal—to disconnect us from ZNPP and blame the Ukrainian army."

At the plant, Russian forces have been fortifying their control for the long haul since seizing it in early March.

The complex is defended by anti-personnel mines alongside the reservoir that feeds water into the reactor and the ponds that cool its spent rods. Heavy weaponry in place has included Smerch missile launchers and Grad rocket launchers, according to plant workers, Ukrainian officials and satellite and cellphone imagery of the complex.

On Saturday, a worker photographed a 203-millimeter self-propelled Russian artillery unit along the road to the plant—emblazoned with the Russian "Z" symbol. The photo was viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Some 500 Russian soldiers live in makeshift barracks around the plant and in [the nearby town of Enerhodar](#).

Ukraine's government said in a letter to the IAEA last week, reviewed by the Journal, that Rosatom executives were leading Russian efforts to sever the nuclear plant from the Ukrainian grid. "To destroy the plant's infrastructure, cause damage to transmission lines...and to cause a blackout in the south of Ukraine," the letter said.

President Zelensky warned in his Saturday address that any Russian soldiers who shoot at Europe's largest nuclear-power station or use it as a base to shoot from would become a "special target" for Ukrainian forces.

Petro Kotin, president of Energoatom, said in an interview with Ukrainian television that Rosatom staff were initiating a "special procedure that will allow them to reconnect the plant's electricity to Crimea," through substations in territories occupied by Russian forces.

Asked about that accusation, Rosatom said: "We categorically and unequivocally deny these allegations. They are completely untrue."

Ukrainian security officials said Russian engineers in occupied territories have been quizzing managers at substations on how to best reroute Zaporizhzhia's power.

When Rosatom technicians arrived shortly after Russian forces seized the plant on March 1, they asked Ukrainian workers if it would be possible to redirect its electricity to existing lines in Crimea.

"They were open about it," said a technician who fled across the front line with his family earlier this month. "They asked us for schemes of electricity systems."

Key hub for electricity

Rosatom is the successor of the state-owned entities responsible for the civilian nuclear program in the former Soviet Union, where huge investment in power generation allowed Communist leaders to rapidly industrialize their agrarian empire.

Soviet Ukraine was a key hub for electricity generation through giant hydroelectric turbines along the Dnipro River early in the 20th century and nuclear power later in the century.

When the Soviet Union broke apart, Russia, Belarus and Ukraine retained connections among their electrical grids and traded power.

After Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukraine and the European Union began retooling the country's high voltage transmission system to disconnect from Russia's grid and reconnect them into Europe's. On Feb. 24, the day the war began, Ukraine was conducting a test to see how its grid would fare if entirely disconnected from Russia's.

Since then, Zaporizhzhia has continued to feed power across battle lines to Ukrainian-held ground.

Russia can't simply shut the plant down, nuclear analysts said, because it would be too hard to restart. The plant's total staff numbered 11,000 before the war sent many fleeing for safety, and a shutdown could accelerate that exodus. Russia doesn't have the manpower to recruit thousands of skilled workers needed to run a nuclear station near an active front line, independent nuclear analysts say.

What it can do, the analysts said, is slice off the plant's connections to the rest of Ukraine—the transmission line hit Aug. 5 supplied unoccupied Ukraine—while over coming months install the infrastructure to reroute power to occupied territories, Russia and even export markets, where the price of electricity is surging.

"This would be the biggest electricity heist ever," said Thomas Popik, chairman of the Foundation for Resilient Societies, a U.S.-based nonprofit group dedicated to the protection of critical infrastructure. "These attacks on the plants are very carefully calibrated to damage but not destroy."

On Friday, Russia's Federation Council said Ukraine's alleged strikes on the plant had ruled out the possibility of ever returning it to Kyiv. "The only way to ensure safety at a nuclear-power plant is 100% control over its activities," said Konstantin Kosachev, vice speaker of the council. Asked whether it would be possible to return the plant to Ukraine, he said: "No, and again no."

Russia has blocked Ukrainian proposals to send an IAEA delegation to the plant overland via Ukrainian-held territory, and Kyiv opposes Moscow's proposal that delegations reach the plant via the Russian-controlled Crimean Peninsula.

Russia's ambassador to the United Nations Security Council, Vasily Nebenzya, said Ukraine was responsible for the shelling, risking a "nuclear catastrophe it is impossible even to imagine...In this case, all responsibility for this will fall on the Western sponsors of Kyiv."

IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi said on Thursday there was "a real risk of nuclear disaster" unless the fighting stops and inspectors are urgently allowed inside the facility.

In addition to risks to the physical integrity of the building from shelling, the IAEA said the lack of regular off-site monitoring of radiation, the blockage of spare parts, fuel and supplies, and a short-handed and exhausted staff collectively amount to a nuclear safety crisis.

'Totally different behavior'

On Aug. 5, the first shells began exploding shortly after lunch. A voice on the public address system ordered workers to leave open areas to head for shelter inside the better-protected buildings.

Ukrainian workers noticed Russian soldiers moving calmly toward their bases. "During this shelling, their behavior was totally different," said one Ukrainian technician. "When there is a single Ukrainian drone flying above the station, Russians run away in panic."

The first artillery shell landed near an electrical switchboard. The plant needs backup power to keep emergency systems running, either from on-site generators or from transmission lines from other plants.

Employees couldn't call their families in the neighboring Enerhodar, where people could hear the explosions. Cellphones brought to work had been confiscated, as usual, by guards.

	<p>Shelling in recent days has hit other installations around the plant, knocking out pumps for sewage, transmission lines and a nearby neighborhood of five-story apartments built to house staff. Analysts say many of those targets are designed to hurt the transmission of energy to Ukrainian-held territory.</p> <p>The back-to-back explosions have been a shock even for workers inured to the pressure of safeguarding the station during nearly six months of occupation.</p> <p>The station, a proud symbol of Ukrainian industry—much of it built after the country’s independence—has become an occupied garrison.</p> <p>Russian flags and a picture of President Vladimir Putin now hang in the hallways where soldiers have been hunting for spies. In May, they shot a 53-year-old maintenance technician, Sergey Shvets, for allegedly passing information to Ukraine. Mr. Shvets survived and last month was recovering in a hospital in Enerhodar.</p> <p>As reports arrived of mass rape by Russian soldiers during their brief occupation of the central Ukrainian town of Bucha, Ukrainian managers asked female employees not to wear makeup or revealing clothes, afraid of predation from the troops patrolling town or checking purses, bags and pockets at the entrance to the plants.</p> <p>The Russians have begun to park materiel near strategically important places, such as water pipelines and electricity transformers, apparently to deter a Ukrainian response.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Forecast: mid-week heatwave western WA
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3594815/mid-week-heatwave-forecasted-envelop-western-wa-90-degree-days/
GIST	<p>Another period of warmer than average weather is on tap this week.</p> <p>Higher pressure aloft over the Rocky Mountain region, already producing hot dry weather there, is expected to bulge over the Pacific NW by mid-week. This weather feature is forecast to push temperatures back up into the 80s across much of the North Sound, and potentially above 90 degrees in even warmer locations such as the Cascade valleys.</p> <p>Overnight temperatures are once again expected to be quite warm — in the upper 50s and 60s.</p> <p>With longer nights now, it becomes tougher to hit the 90-degree mark in Seattle, yet it can and has happened.</p> <p>SeaTac has hit 90 or higher 10 times already this year. SeaTac’s most frequent number of 90-degree days was recorded in 2015 when it reached that mark 12 times.</p> <p>Quite warm days this time of year tend to “spike” – rise up and then drop again as opposed to July’s heat wave when the hottest time period of the day looks more like a bell curve.</p> <p>With yet more very warm weather ahead, now is the time to prepare. Remember to avoid physical activities during the heat of the day, drink plenty of water, and seek shade or air-conditioned facilities periodically. If driving and parking, beat the heat – check the back seat. Avoid leaving children and pets in a hot car, even for only 5 minutes.</p> <p>If longer-range forecasts are accurate, the heat may wane over the weekend but may resume the following week.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Spokane forecast near-record heat possible
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SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/weather/near-record-heat-possible-this-week/293-646c9579-7c9a-4ecd-a10d-d0030beb8e51
GIST	<p>SPOKANE COUNTY, Wash. — This summer season has already brought Spokane twenty-one days of 90°+ weather. Four of those days were over 100° and the hottest temperature recorded at the Spokane Airport so far has been 102° which occurred on both July 29th and July 31st. On average Spokane sees nineteen days of 90°+ temperatures per year.</p> <p>This week's weather pattern has the four corners high pressure system building back into the Pacific Northwest, which will allow our temperatures to soar once again into the upper 90s and low 100s. This could be another prolonged heat wave with the very hot temperatures sticking around through the upcoming weekend. It's possible that monsoonal moisture could work it's way back into the region by the end of the week, however, bringing clouds and potential thunderstorms, which could limit our warming a bit, but it will certainly still be hot.</p> <p>An Excessive Heat Watch has been issued for parts of Central Washington and also the Lewiston area for this Wednesday through Friday with expected highs in the upper 90s to 105° range. Spokane will likely see temperatures in the upper 90s to near 100°.</p> <p>Excessive Heat Watch One difference between this forecast heat wave and the one from two weeks ago is the number of daylight hours. We'll have about 50 minutes less daylight this week, than what we had back in late July. More "night" means more time to cool down.</p> <p>Record highs for the Spokane Airport for the Thursday through Saturday time period range from 100°-101°, so we could be close to tying those records each day.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Ukraine claims Crimea airbase attack
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2022/08/14/crimea-airbase-attack/
GIST	<p>Shortly before 3:20 p.m. on Aug. 9, Nikolay Abbasov, a resident of Saki, near Crimea's western Black Sea coast, heard an explosion. Walking to his window, he filmed a cloud of smoke rising in the distance. At almost the same moment, a Russian influencer, Diana Andreeva, was enjoying the beach in nearby Novofedorivka when she turned her camera to capture the cloud, which was rising from Saki air base, home to the Russian Navy's 43rd Independent Naval Attack Aviation Regiment.</p> <p>About 50 minutes later, both would capture two massive explosions at the base, capping an alleged attack claimed by Ukraine that killed at least one person and injured 13 others, according to Russian officials. The blasts left at least eight military aircraft destroyed or significantly damaged and wrecked parts of the facility, according to defense sources, military analysts and a review of satellite imagery. If Ukraine was responsible, the attack would be one of its most audacious of the war, playing out in front of residents and tourists deep into Crimea, which Russia seized in 2014.</p> <p>To better understand what happened in Saki, The Washington Post analyzed more than two dozen videos, spoke to eyewitnesses, and consulted eight military and geospatial experts, confirming that at least six explosions rocked the base over the course of nearly an hour.</p> <p>Anonymous Ukrainian officials have said the attack was carried out by the country's special forces or guerrilla fighters known as "partisans," but have provided few details. Resistance fighters have been active in Kherson, which neighbors Crimea to the north, where they've been blamed for assassinations.</p> <p>A senior Pentagon official on Friday told reporters that Ukraine had selected the target and that the Defense Department hadn't determined what weapons were used. A news article on the Pentagon's website does not attribute an attack to Ukraine.</p>

Russia said the incident resulted from the accidental detonation of munitions at the site — a theory that The Post’s analysis does not rule out. Crimean leader Sergey Aksyonov [raised the terrorist threat](#) level to “yellow” but did not comment on Ukraine’s potential involvement.

Ukraine’s vague explanations have inspired various [theories from analysts](#), including that special forces planted explosive charges at the base or used drones to fire or deliver bombs, or that the country’s military used a precision weapon with a range beyond systems it is known to operate.

Experts said The Post’s analysis raises questions about how any attack was conducted, and whether it benefited from secondary blasts caused by fires at the base.

“The question remains: How many of these explosions were caused by independent events, versus a chain effect of initial exploding ordnance or fuel that then caught other ordnance or fuel on fire?” said Dara Massicot, a senior policy researcher at the Rand Corp.

‘The sky is pitch black’

The Post synchronized videos and images shared on social media confirming at least a half-dozen explosions at Saki air base. Witnesses told The Post that they heard more.

Shortly before 3:20 p.m., Abbasov filmed smoke from the first blast identified by The Post. “It just hit so hard — it made my bed shake,” he says in the video. The footage matches accounts of other witnesses, and a Russian Defense Ministry [statement](#) that said “several aircraft munitions detonated at an enclosed storage site” at “about 3.20 p.m.”

Andreeva, the influencer, filmed that initial explosion and posted an edited video showing several blasts, along with [her reactions, on Instagram](#).

Another explosion was recorded minutes later. One video, taken north of the base, briefly captures a small flash. Less than a second later a fireball erupts, then turns into a mushroom cloud. The Post confirmed the order of the blasts by examining smoke and confirming the timing with multiple witnesses.

Residents and beachgoers in Novofedorivka filmed the same explosion.

Photographer [Dmitry Filatov](#) was at home in Novofedorivka when he started hearing booms. After the second, he left to check on his grandfather, who lives close to the air base. “On the way back, the third explosion happened as I was walking by the neighboring building,” Filatov told The Post. “The shock wave blew the windows out in the building and they flew towards us.”

At 3:44 p.m., Abbasov photographed a small cloud rising from a bed of smoke, which he described as the aftermath of another blast. Video taken from a nearby residential building caught the same cloud, as well as a separate blast.

At about 4:11 p.m., Abbasov recorded the aftermath of two huge explosions. A Post analysis of other footage shows the blasts occurred a fraction of a second apart, suggesting one may have triggered the other, known as a sympathetic explosion, according to Justin Bronk, senior research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute.

Andreeva also filmed the dual blasts, and confirmed they took place about 4:11 p.m. “They keep getting louder and louder,” she says in her Instagram video. “The sky is pitch black.” Other videos showed the two fireballs turn into smoke and rise into the sky.

‘It’s a mystery’

Satellite imagery examined by The Post confirmed significant damage in at least four locations at the base that analysts said were probably used for storage. It also showed that [fires had burned extensively](#) at the base and crept toward Novofedorivka. Planes were damaged despite being parked

within protective blast walls known as revetments. Despite the heavy toll, analysts said the airfield remains functional. Videos and photographs examined by The Post showed blown-out windows and damaged homes in the town.

Experts consulted by The Post agreed that no piece of evidence comprehensively explained what occurred Tuesday. But video and satellite analysis offer clues.

Massicot, who examined imagery captured in May, said she found that the base regularly stored ammunition or other supplies near or in aircraft parking areas, a vulnerability she says Ukraine may have spotted.

“By targeting storage safety problems, whatever caused this explosion was able to do significant damage to fixed-wing fighter aircraft,” she said.

In an assessment released Friday, the U.K. Defense Ministry said it hadn’t confirmed “the original cause of the blasts,” but that “the large mushroom clouds visible in eyewitness video were almost certainly from the detonation of up to four uncovered munition storage areas.”

Bronk said the delay between explosions at the base made it unlikely that missiles were responsible for all the damage. A more plausible scenario, he said, was that Ukrainian forces were close enough to fly drones, and were able to either drop small munitions or fly directly into targets, causing wider explosions. “You can almost picture the bad damage control,” he said.

Mark F. Cancian, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the damage to planes in revetments suggested they could have been targeted. An analysis conducted by the defense intelligence provider Janes also assessed that the air base was likely struck by “relatively large munitions.”

The base is [over 140 miles](#) from the closest front line, and Cancian acknowledged that nothing known to be used by Ukraine explained what happened at the airfield. No available videos show projectiles moving toward the base.

“All of the indicators don’t lead in a single direction,” Cancian told The Post. “It’s such a mystery.”

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HEADLINE	08/15 China new military drills near Taiwan
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/15/taiwan-china-military-drills-delegation-congress/
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan — China announced new military drills around Taiwan on Monday, as a delegation of U.S. lawmakers met with Taiwanese officials at a time of heightened tensions in the region, with Beijing accusing the United States of “playing cheap political tricks” by strengthening its unofficial relationship with the self-governing democracy.</p> <p>The delegation of five members of Congress, led by Sen. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.), were expected to meet with President Tsai Ing-wen during an overnight stop in Taipei as part of a larger tour of Asia, according to a statement from the American Institute in Taiwan. Taiwan had not released details of the meeting by Monday midafternoon local time.</p> <p>In a news conference Monday, China Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin criticized the delegation as sending “seriously wrong signals” toward “separatist forces” in Taiwan.</p> <p>“China will take firm and effective measures to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” he said.</p>

Beijing's reaction on Monday was less fiery than its response to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit two weeks earlier, which sparked the largest [display of Chinese military saber rattling](#) since the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis.

On Monday afternoon, however, the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) Eastern Theater Command announced drills involving multiple branches of the military near Taiwan, which it said were a warning to the United States and Taiwan of "playing cheap political tricks." China's defense ministry said in a statement that the latest visit by U.S. lawmakers showed that the United States was the "true agitator and breaker of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait," adding that the PLA was continuing to perfect its ability to repel any foreign interference in the region.

The initially muted response is starkly different from a flurry of angry statements from Beijing released as soon as Pelosi's plane touched down in Taipei on Aug. 2. Because of security concerns, U.S. lawmaker visits to Taiwan are usually unannounced — unlike the House Speaker's trip which was reported by the Financial Times in July.

China's military show of force in response to Pelosi's visit began in earnest a day after she left. Then, over four days, China fired missiles into the sea on all sides of Taiwan's main island while fighter jets repeatedly crossed the unofficial border that runs down the middle of the strait. Taiwan's military said the drills were tantamount to a blockade and involved [simulation of an attack](#), although disruptions to commercial flights and shipping were limited and daily life continued largely as normal for Taiwan's 23 million residents.

White House Indo-Pacific coordinator Kurt Campbell on Friday said China had "overreacted." He said the United States would continue to conduct air and maritime transits through the Taiwan Strait in the next few weeks.

The arrival of another delegation just as tensions in the Taiwan Strait were easing underscores a growing rift between Beijing and Washington over the latter's efforts to strengthen its unofficial relationship with Taipei. While the United States is seeking to normalize visits by its lawmakers, China is trying to "securitize" exchanges with regular military responses, said Wen-Ti Sung, a scholar at the Australian National University's Taiwan Studies Program.

"U.S. congressional visits to Taiwan do not amount to change in U.S. policy, though Beijing may criticize them as such," Sung said, adding that reconsidering or delaying such visits to Taiwan for fear of provoking a drastic Chinese military response "would allow Beijing to link a normal exercise in parliamentary diplomacy with military stability, and securitize a hitherto relatively nonsensitive area of diplomacy."

Beijing in recent months has issued increasingly pointed warnings directed at both Taipei and Washington not to test its resolve over Taiwan. In a [white paper](#) issued last week, China's State Council instructed the United States to "not to stand in the way of the reunification of China" and laid out Beijing's belief that the United States is undermining China's claims through actions including "contriving 'official' exchanges with Taiwan, increasing arms sales, and colluding in military provocation."

The document also did away with a previous commitment not to station PLA troops or send administrative personnel to Taiwan in the event of unification — a shift [widely interpreted](#) in Taiwan as indicating a hardened position from Beijing.

The White House has repeatedly stated that the United States' "one China" policy — which acknowledges Beijing's claims over Taiwan but takes no position on how the two sides should resolve their differences other than urging a peaceful resolution — remains unchanged. Under the Taiwan Relations Act, Washington retains close unofficial ties with Taipei, including supporting Taiwanese efforts to build up its own defense.

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SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/realestate/more-home-deals-are-falling-through.html
GIST	<p>When pandemic lockdowns hit the real estate industry, showings were halted, homes were yanked off the market, and municipal offices that process closing documents were shuttered. As a result, in March of 2020 nearly 18 percent of purchase contracts in the United States were canceled — though it only took a few months to return to typical levels.</p> <p>But in 2022, the frequency of canceled deals has begun to rise again, reaching nearly 15 percent in June — the highest rate since the pandemic peak, according to a recent report by Redfin, representing about 60,000 failed home sales across the nation.</p> <p>The likely culprit: rising mortgage interest rates. The journey from accepted bid to closing day can take to two months or more, and interest rates sometimes shift in the interim. Buyers can lock in rates for certain periods of time, but not all do, and even a small increase can stretch monthly payments out of range and kill a deal. And this year's rate increases were substantial. Consider, for example, that the average rate for a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage rose from 3.79 percent in January to 5.3 percent in July. That change would increase a monthly payment by about \$90 for every \$100,000 borrowed.</p> <p>The locations where the highest percentage of deals fell through in June — many in the South and Southwest — are some of the most popular for buyers. In Las Vegas, just over 27 percent of deals collapsed in June, the highest rate among all markets, according to Redfin. Favored destinations in Florida followed, including Lakeland, Fla., just under 27 percent, and Cape Coral, Fla., just under 26 percent.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Help at-risk students jeopardize privacy?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/times-watchdog/king-county-program-to-help-at-risk-students-could-jeopardize-privacy/
GIST	<p>The middle school students across King County opened their school email, clicked a hyperlink to fill out a questionnaire and began confiding some of the most sensitive parts of their lives into the screen.</p> <p>In Auburn, 22 students ages 10 to 12 reported using alcohol, marijuana, tobacco or vaping. In Northshore, 39 students said they were questioning their gender identity. In Seattle, 119 students said they had thought seriously about suicide in the past year.</p> <p>Asked what they experience at home, some students typed paragraphs about their anguish. “please don’t share this with anyone cause my parents might get mad at me,” one student wrote.</p> <p>The data collection is part of a roughly \$30 million initiative funded by King County to screen middle- and high-school students for mental health, substance use and other risks. After screening more than 20,000 students over four years, county officials say the program is delivering on its promise, identifying previously unknown needs and saving student lives.</p> <p>But no one tells kids or their parents that they have helped fine-tune a commercial screening tool whose accuracy hasn’t been rigorously tested. No one tells them that contractors evaluating the program have a broader research agenda for the screening tool. And no one tells them that the information schools gather, without student names but with potentially identifying information, could become public, an investigation by The Seattle Times has found.</p> <p>The questionnaire collects students’ age, grade, race, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, school, and other details they include in open-ended responses — an unusually intimate record for a survey that isn’t anonymous.</p> <p>This data is transmitted without student names to a for-profit software firm, which grants access to Seattle Children’s Research Institute — both contracted by King County. Schools, which can link student names to their answers, follow up with them to offer support.</p>

With such sensitive information in hand, schools must determine whether kids' screening results are part of their education record. If so, parents would have a right under federal law to see things that their children might not want them to know. If not, the information isn't protected by a federal privacy law — raising the prospect that it could be released publicly and compromise student privacy, experts say.

The 12 school districts participating in screening disagree whether the federal privacy law applies, but nearly all said that data they share with King County has no information that could identify kids. To test how well schools protect this data, The Times requested it under Washington's Public Records Act.

Only one district so far, Highline, [declined](#) to provide the data, saying it is part of students' education records. Three districts provided anonymous student responses with many redactions, admitting that the data shared with King County and its contractors contains identifying student information. Five districts provided student responses with limited or no redactions.

Some students responded to open-ended questions with names of family members, friends and pets. (The Times did not attempt to identify any students.)

Even without names, each piece of demographic information — such as the grade, ethnicity and school of a student who reports being captain of the soccer team — can dramatically shrink the universe of students to the point that they could be identified, according to privacy experts.

“That feels to me like a significant gap that can result in real harm to students, especially considering the sensitivity of the questions that were asked and the responses that were elicited,” said Linnette Attai, a privacy consultant and author.

King County officials say that the data is “subject to robust security safeguards” and that they haven't had any problems or received any reports of harm from students. The data is purged from a central database every summer, according to the county, though it acknowledged that schools can export and save their own copies.

Katie Rogers, a county spokesperson, said that the questionnaire “builds on proven approaches” and that four years of collecting data demonstrates the program's effectiveness.

The program is voluntary and its risk is minimal, the county says, especially considering the [crisis](#) in youth mental health.

That crisis is well documented, with the suicide rate for kids ages 10 to 14 doubling from 2011 to 2020, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Some students have said that the screening shows their schools care about them. Schools have credited the program with revealing many cases of students who were suffering in private.

“For whatever reason, they're not reaching out to adults, but they're saying on the screen, ‘I need some support’ and we're able to follow up with that, and then reach them early,” said Margaret Soukup, who coordinates the program for King County.

Interviews with 35 experts in screening questionnaires, research ethics and privacy yielded a complex mosaic of views on the program. Experts in screening youth generally lauded King County's approach as innovative and thoughtful, while privacy professionals voiced alarm about the data collection. Several ethics scholars questioned whether the program crosses into research — despite a Seattle Children's [panel decision](#) that it didn't — which generally would require informed consent from students or their parents.

Others questioned why the county hired Seattle Children's to evaluate the program when the institution has ownership rights to the screening tool at the heart of the program. That “should have raised some red flags,” said John Baumann, associate vice president for research compliance at Indiana University. “Why would they do that?”

A researcher and a conflict

As King County laid the groundwork for its new screening program in 2017, Soukup consulted an expert on the subject, a professor at Seattle Children's Research Institute named Cari McCarty.

There are many free or low-cost questionnaires for screening kids, from mental health to substance use, that have been scientifically validated for accuracy. McCarty [suggested](#) such a questionnaire, but King County wanted one that covered a broader range than the off-the-shelf options.

Flush with cash from the Best Starts for Kids levy — which voters last year [expanded](#) to \$872 million over six years — and Mental Illness and Drug Dependency sales tax, the county had ample means to build its own program.

King County fashioned its model on an approach known as SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment, pronounced “ESS-birt”), which traditionally [focuses](#) on substance use. Soukup's team settled on a questionnaire called “Check Yourself” that hasn't been validated but is customizable. McCarty knew Check Yourself well. She'd helped to [create it](#).

Seattle Children's owns the copyright to Check Yourself, according to a hospital lawyer's [email](#), and licensed it to Tickit Health, a Canadian firm that adapted the questionnaire for electronic use. McCarty herself stood to receive royalties from Tickit's sales of Check Yourself, according to [disclosures](#) on [academic papers](#).

“I am personally excited that you are recommending Check Yourself,” McCarty [emailed](#) Soukup in January 2018.

King County authorized two no-bid contracts: purchasing a [subscription to Check Yourself](#) from Tickit, and [hiring McCarty's team](#) to evaluate it, for at least \$240,000 and \$588,000, respectively. As principal investigator, McCarty would effectively evaluate her own work.

McCarty said in an email “I have never received any compensation in any form” related to the licensing of Check Yourself and that she had given up rights to any future compensation. She didn't elaborate or respond to interview requests or written questions.

Sandy Whitehouse, Tickit's co-founder, said the company has never paid McCarty or Seattle Children's “in connection with our work with King County.”

An [initial evaluation](#) published in 2020 highlighted apparent successes, mentioning McCarty's role as a co-creator of Check Yourself but not disclosing any conflicts.

“They're bound to be biased because they have a stake in the outcome,” Peter York, an expert in program evaluations as a principal at the consulting firm BCT Partners, said of the McCarty-led team. That could undermine a good program, he said, adding, “In all likelihood, a program like this, I think is going to make a difference.”

Seattle Children's [implemented a plan](#) to manage McCarty's interest in Check Yourself, and county officials were satisfied with it. In response to written questions, King County officials wrote, “We have full confidence in this evaluation model and the expertise of Seattle Children's on this program.”

To evaluate the program, McCarty and her team submitted their [plan](#) to the Seattle Children's Institutional Review Board (IRB), an oversight panel that looks out for the welfare of participants in research.

At the time, she was involved in at least four [IRB-approved studies](#) involving Check Yourself. The analysis for King County schools was different, according to McCarty's plan, because her team was trying to improve the county's program and not seeking to conduct research. The IRB was [persuaded](#), but some experts disagree.

“They’re trying to learn whether it works, whether it is able to identify at-risk middle school students and is therefore a useful and appropriate tool to use in middle schools,” said Michael Carome, director of Public Citizen’s health research group and a former senior official at the U.S. Office for Human Research Protections. “Those are factors that strongly point to this being research.”

Casey Egan, a Seattle Children’s spokesperson, declined to respond to questions regarding the IRB’s determination.

McCarty and her team [submitted a paper](#) last year to an academic journal about their work in King County. “I am very surprised,” one reviewer [wrote](#), that the authors’ work was “determined to not be human subjects research and IRB approval was not needed.”

“It is hard to walk the line”

As schools began administering Check Yourself in 2018, some raised questions about the evidence behind it.

“We are unsure if we are being asked to field test a research or diagnostic tool,” staff at Tukwila School District wrote in an initial [progress report](#) to King County.

Amid the pushback, Margaret Cary, a county physician, acknowledged in an [email](#) with colleagues in 2019 that “it is hard to walk the line of ‘experimenting’ on kids vs expanding the evidence base and trying to improve on existing efforts.”

Cary, who has since left King County, said that the program is “both evidence informed and an important innovation to fill a gap.” She added, “There was universal advocacy from multiple stakeholders that Check Yourself was the best fit.”

Based on students’ experiences, King County, Seattle Children’s and Tickit made a series of tweaks to Check Yourself. Among the changes: giving students the option not to answer some questions, tweaking language on sexual attraction, and removing questions about trauma that they decided [shouldn’t be asked](#). Many schools have warmed to the benefits of screening.

“We’ve been able to reach so many kids who otherwise might have fallen under the radar,” an Auburn School District counselor [wrote](#).

Highline School District created a “Queer Connections” support group after using SBIRT data to uncover “an unsafe school environment for students who identify as LGBTQ+.”

In the Tahoma School District, a straight-A student confided in Check Yourself that he had thoughts of suicide. Following an intervention, the boy stopped harming himself.

Even as the program notches successes, schools have had to reckon with questions from parents about the content and the privacy of screening.

Parents in most cases receive a general notification about the program with the option to opt out, but not detailed information about sensitive questions like gender and sexuality. Seattle Children’s is exploring [these topics](#) for their links to health.

“I felt like it’s completely none of their business and totally irrelevant,” a Lake Washington School District parent, who asked that her name be withheld to protect the privacy of her kids, said of the gender and sexuality questions. She said that the screening quickly became the talk of the school, with students speculating about why their peers were pulled from class to meet with a counselor.

A parent in the Snoqualmie Valley School District went a step further: asking to see what records the school was collecting.

The Snoqualmie parent emailed the school principal in March 2020 to ask for all the child's SBIRT records for a "data privacy research project," according to correspondence the district provided in response to a public-records request.

School staff were not sure what to do. "We tell the students that this is not going to be shared with anyone, except for the counseling team," one staffer [emailed](#) colleagues.

Snoqualmie Valley told The Times that student responses to Check Yourself are "not identifiable by name," and "staff do not maintain records of the student responses." Yet three months after the Snoqualmie parent asked for the SBIRT records, the district provided a copy.

A district spokesperson had no explanation for how officials provided a record they claim not to keep, but LeRoy Rooker did.

"They know they have to," said Rooker, a former head of the U.S. Department of Education's Family Policy Compliance Office, who along with three other education experts believes student responses to Check Yourself are part of students' education record.

Of greater concern, he said, is that some schools provide the anonymous screening data publicly, believing that removing names is enough to protect student identities.

"If I were a parent," he said, "I would be very disturbed by that."

Students, for their part, have reported that Check Yourself is easy to use. Tickit Health says its questionnaires are [designed](#) — through language, colors and icons — to build trust with various audiences and elicit more accurate information, and the approach appears to be effective with some students.

"Thanks for making us do this survey," a Tahoma student wrote in response to an open-ended prompt. The student had initially felt uncertain, but after opening the questionnaire, "I felt like I could tell you guys anything that's bothering me."

A deeper look at student screening, research and privacy

What's the problem with schools publicly releasing student data if it doesn't have their names attached to it? Is that the only risk to student privacy?

The U.S. Department of Education's [privacy guidelines](#) require schools to remove "direct identifiers" — such as names — from data being released, but that alone "DOES NOT constitute adequate de-identification." In other words, removing just the names from student-level data may not be enough to protect their identities. The U.S. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) considers student data to be identifiable if "a reasonable person in the school community" without personal knowledge of the circumstances could "identify the student with reasonable certainty."

Apart from school districts publicly releasing such data, even keeping it and using it to run the program presents certain privacy risks. One district, in response to a public-records request by The Seattle Times for documents that include the term "Check Yourself," provided emails between its [SBIRT](#) specialist and therapists that discussed screening results for some students, including one's suicidal thoughts.

There's also the ever-present threat of cyberattacks. The U.S. Government Accountability Office [found](#) that thousands of students were affected by data breaches between 2016 and 2020. King County said in a 2020 [audit](#) that it is "very likely" that the county could experience a breach within five years.

What does it mean for a screening tool to be validated?

A validation study gauges how accurately a tool measures what it intends to measure. A [validated screening tool](#) should be able to accurately flag at-risk students and rule out those who aren't at risk, as a COVID-19 test detects the presence or absence of the coronavirus.

Organizations like the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) and the [National Association of School Psychologists](#) recommend using validated screening tools, and it is considered a [best practice](#) by some experts in school screening. Other experts say it's important for schools to use questionnaires that get at issues they really want to know about, rather than limiting themselves to validated tools. King County officials stress that their aim is to start conversations, not to make diagnoses.

The version of [Check Yourself](#) used in King County schools includes a handful of questions drawn or adapted from validated screeners (such as the GAD-2, for anxiety, and the PHQ-2, for depression) with the majority of questions being drawn from other sources. Prior to launching the SBIRT program, there was a local [randomized trial](#) involving Check Yourself in King County that used different questions for an older adolescent population.

Though not a validation study, a former county physician points to this data as relevant, saying that the school questionnaire included some of the same questions as the trial version and maintained the "general approach methodology." The Check Yourself version used in middle schools has been revised at least two times.

Given that an institutional review board (IRB) determined the SBIRT evaluation isn't research, why is there debate over this? Why does it matter?

When IRBs examine whether a project is research, they are applying a technical and somewhat vague definition from the [federal code](#): "a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge." Exactly what constitutes "generalizable knowledge" isn't defined, so there is a gray area that scholars have [debated](#) for years.

The team evaluating King County's SBIRT program [informed](#) the IRB that the findings "will be used solely to inform program improvement for this SBIRT program and will not be generalizable beyond this project." Still, some experts point out that part of the [evaluation's goal](#) — to determine whether SBIRT is "an appropriate model for youth in middle school" — and [findings](#) about its promise have the potential to affect a much broader population than those who participated in the program, giving it the feel of research. Quite a few scholars emphasized that disagreements are common in this field. As one expert put it, determining whether a project is research is "a continuum, not a dichotomy."

Had an IRB determined the program met the definition of research, it would have required oversight that can be expensive and time-consuming for researchers. That oversight generally comes with the requirement that participants — or parents of minors — give [informed consent](#), a high bar that often significantly limits who participates.

What changes might enhance protections for student privacy?

One interesting counterpoint to King County is Massachusetts, which passed a [law](#) in 2016 requiring schools to verbally screen students for substance use. The state uses a [validated screening tool](#) known as the CRAFFT-II. The same state law prohibits creating any record that includes information that could identify a student, a legal mandate that doesn't exist in Washington.

Other experts concerned about data privacy suggested that King County school districts should eliminate the school that students attend when transmitting data to [Tickit's](#) central platform. That would effectively place anonymous students in a much larger population — the district rather than their school — and offer them greater privacy.

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HEADLINE	08/14 Average gas price continues fall; \$4.10/gal.
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/nation-world/average-us-gasoline-price-falls-45-cents-to-410-per-gallon-inflation-recession-gas-oil

GIST	<p>CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — The average U.S. price of regular-grade gasoline plummeted 45 cents over the past three weeks to \$4.10 per gallon.</p> <p>Industry analyst Trilby Lundberg of the Lundberg Survey said Sunday that the continued decline comes as crude oil costs also remain low.</p> <p>"The drop of a dollar per gallon has not been enough to restore motorist demand, which is in retreat due to sustained high price levels," Lundberg said in a statement.</p> <p>The average price at the pump is down a dollar over the past nine weeks, but it's 85 cents higher than it was one year ago.</p> <p>Nationwide, the highest average price for regular-grade gas was in the San Francisco Bay Area, at \$5.36 per gallon. The lowest average was in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, at \$3.38 per gallon.</p> <p>According to the survey, the average price of diesel plunged 37 cents over three weeks to \$5.17 a gallon.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 WA infrastructure projects grant awards
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/washington-state-97-million-transportation-projects/281-2df88c7f-923f-484a-aa0d-5ca950b932ce
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — U.S. transportation officials announced \$2.2 billion for local infrastructure projects on Thursday, paving the way for new bridges, roads, bike lanes, railways and ports in scores of communities across the country.</p> <p>The competitive grants are more than double the amount awarded the previous year under the same program. The influx comes from a \$1 trillion infrastructure law backed by President Joe Biden, which provided an additional \$7.5 billion over five years for the grants.</p> <p>Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said the projects would help modernize America's transportation systems.</p> <p>"This is a program that recognizes many of the most interesting and compelling ideas and designs and plans aren't going to come from Washington, but more of the funding should," Buttigieg said. "That's what we're delivering here."</p> <p>Buttigieg said the U.S. Department of Transportation received about \$13 billion in grant applications. A total of 166 projects across the country are getting a slice of the \$2.2 billion.</p> <p>Here are the Washington state projects set to receive more than \$97 million in total.</p> <p>Washington State Department of Transportation The Washington State Department of Transportation will receive \$6 million for two planning projects.</p> <p>The first planning project will fund studies in Seattle and Spokane with the goal to help reconnect communities divided by Interstate 90 across Washington state. The project will eventually reconnect underserved communities by creating safe and accessible transportation options.</p> <p>The second project will also complete a study on how to better connect residents from nearby communities to Yakima, including services and jobs. The study will explore street improvements to connect bicycle and pedestrian paths in Toppenish, Wapato and Union Gap. Overall, the project seeks to create safe pedestrian bicycle crossings at US 97 and SR 22.</p> <p>Whatcom County Whatcom County will receive \$25 million to replace the Lummi Island ferry and modernize its systems.</p>

The project will replace the 60-year-old ferry with an electric-battery hybrid ferry. The project also includes adjusting the terminal structures to accommodate the new ferry and installing electrical charging infrastructure.

City of Lynnwood

The city will receive \$25 million to construct a new multi-lane bridge over I-5 in between the intersections of 196th Street SW (SR 524)/Poplar Way and 33rd Avenue W/Alderwood Mall Boulevard.

The project seeks to relieve traffic congestion and to allow improved access to development in downtown Lynnwood. The project will also add a protected shared use path for pedestrians and bicyclists.

City of Bothell

The \$19 million project in Bothell will widen Bothell Way NE from Reder Way to 191st St NE to five lanes.

The project will make room for dedicated turn lanes and signals at high-volume intersections and construct protected bike and pedestrian lanes. It will also include fish habitat enhancement and crossings, and wetland mitigation.

City of Spokane Valley

The \$21.7 million project will replace the highway-rail crossing of State Route 27 and the BNSF Railway tracks with a new Pines Road underpass.

The project will replace the intersection of two state highways, SR 27 and SR 290 with a multi-lane roundabout, and construct a separated shared use path under the railroad crossing.

The project seeks to improve supply chain movement while creating a safer environment for vehicle, bike and pedestrian traffic. The project also includes a new trailhead facility with restrooms, electric vehicle charging and non-motorized access to the Centennial Trail and Spokane River.

City of Pullman

Pullman will receive \$1 million to finalize planning for the reconstruction of Airport Road.

The reconstruction includes a wider roadway section, shared use bike path, intersection roundabout and pedestrian sidewalk accessing the Pullman- Moscow Airport. The project will also provide a bus stop that will connect the airport to the regional bus system.

The funding marks a significant increase from the \$983 million distributed among 90 projects in 2021. The allotment is the largest dating to 2009 for a program that has undergone multiple name and emphasis changes during the presidential administrations of Barack Obama and Donald Trump.

Though still substantial, the funding doesn't have quite the buying power as anticipated when the infrastructure legislation passed Congress last year. That's because inflation has driven up the cost of key transportation construction materials, such as steel plates for bridges and asphalt for paving roads.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Level 3 evacuation for wildfire near Chelan
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/level-3-evacuation-for-fire-near-chelan/293-f50db8aa-8f21-4808-ac99-c37bfa017842
GIST	CHELAN COUNTY, Wash. — Residents on Sears Creek Rd., are now at level 3 evacuation status, which means leave now. The White River Fire has burned an estimated 20 acres and is burning in the Sears Creek area of the White River drainage, approximately 14 miles northwest of Plain.

	According to Chelan County Emergency Management, residents on White River Road are currently on a level 2 notice. Meanwhile residents on Little Wenatchee Road are at level 1.
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HEADLINE	08/14 Street League Skateboarding tour in Everett
SOURCE	https://www.q13fox.com/news/street-league-skateboarding-tour-brings-top-athletes-olympians-to-everett
GIST	<p>EVERETT, Wash. - The Street League Skateboarding Championship tour kicked off in Everett with some of the most talented athletes in the world competing Saturday.</p> <p>Hundreds filled the stands at the Angel of the Winds Arena to watch the event. Locals feel it's helping to put Everett on the map in the skateboarding community.</p> <p>"I'm really happy with qualifying for the finals," said Roos Zwetsloot, a 2020 Olympian. "It was hard at the beginning to get used to it, and find nice lines, but once I got used to it, it's a pretty nice course."</p> <p>During the competition, participants are graded on their performance which includes a variety of stunts and obstacles with points given for harder tricks.</p> <p>"The course is amazing this year," said Manny Santiago, professional skateboarder and competitor at the SLS event. "They have taken a very cool approach including street-style transitions on the course."</p> <p>He was signing autographs and competing in his qualifying round later in the afternoon.</p> <p>"It's cool to bring it to towns that show a lot of love, so we are just here to put on a show," said Manny.</p> <p>"It actually was a two-year process. We were talking to Thrill One two years before the pandemic," said Tammy Dunn, Executive Director with the Snohomish County Sports Commission.</p> <p>Local residents say it was worth the wait.</p> <p>"It is exciting to have SLS in town because it's one of the most important skating competitions in the world right now," said Ben Corey, the Co-Owner of Pops Skate Shop in Everett. "A single location to get everyone together to celebrate awesome skateboarding."</p> <p>Ben opened the local skate shop in Everett in 2020 and hopes the community eventually builds more local skate parks in the future.</p> <p>"It's extremely accessible, and it's the type of thing you can do in your driveway," said Ben. "We'd love to see a big regional skate park in Everett."</p> <p>"I think that our community needs to have avenues and outlets, so the kids have a safe place to hang out," said Wendy Cook, Past Exalted Ruler with the Elks 479 Lodge. "It's pretty exciting to have something like this here for sure."</p> <p>"For the kids to have an opportunity to be here, and you know, to see what skateboarding has to offer for them especially, is amazing," said Jerome Price, Everett Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County.</p> <p>Jerome brought young skater Elverto Rayo with him to the SLS tour event Saturday as part of the Girls & Boys Club program.</p> <p>"I want to learn how to pop shuvit," said Elverto. "This is a dream come true really. I've been liking skateboarding for, like, two years, and having this in my life is just very special."</p> <p>Elverto says having the SLS athletes in town is an inspiration to young people.</p>

	<p>"I've already been doing a lot of skating, I'm trying to go pro," said Elverto.</p> <p>Manny Santiago gave the young folks in the crowd Saturday some advice. "Just work really hard but remember to have fun, because at the end of the day, we are here to have a good time," he said.</p> <p>It's the first time the event has been back in the Seattle area since 2011. Fans say they'll soak it up while they can.</p> <p>"Hopefully everyone is going to watch tomorrow and yeah, lots of love from the Netherlands," said Roos.</p> <p>The doors to the Angel of the Winds Arena open again on Sunday at noon for the finals.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Coming California megastorm: not if, when
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/12/climate/california-rain-storm.html
GIST	<p>California, where earthquakes, droughts and wildfires have shaped life for generations, also faces the growing threat of another kind of calamity, one whose fury would be felt across the entire state.</p> <p>This one will come from the sky.</p> <p>According to new research, it will very likely take shape one winter in the Pacific, near Hawaii. No one knows exactly when, but from the vast expanse of tropical air around the Equator, atmospheric currents will pluck out a long tendril of water vapor and funnel it toward the West Coast.</p> <p>This vapor plume will be enormous, hundreds of miles wide and more than 1,200 miles long, and seething with ferocious winds. It will be carrying so much water that if you converted it all to liquid, its flow would be about 26 times what the Mississippi River discharges into the Gulf of Mexico at any given moment.</p> <p>When this torpedo of moisture reaches California, it will crash into the mountains and be forced upward. This will cool its payload of vapor and kick off weeks and waves of rain and snow.</p> <p>The coming superstorm — really, a rapid procession of what scientists call atmospheric rivers — will be the ultimate test of the dams, levees and bypasses California has built to impound nature's might.</p> <p>But in a state where scarcity of water has long been the central fact of existence, global warming is not only worsening droughts and wildfires. Because warmer air can hold more moisture, atmospheric rivers can carry bigger cargoes of precipitation. The infrastructure design standards, hazard maps and disaster response plans that protected California from flooding in the past might soon be out of date.</p> <p>As humans burn fossil fuels and heat up the planet, we have already increased the chances each year that California will experience a monthlong, statewide megastorm of this severity to roughly 1 in 50, according to a new study published Friday. (The hypothetical storm visualized here is based on computer modeling from this study.)</p> <p>In the coming decades, if global average temperatures climb by another 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit, or 1 degree Celsius — and current trends suggest they might — then the likelihood of such storms will go up further, to nearly 1 in 30.</p> <p>At the same time, the risk of megastorms that are rarer but even stronger, with much fiercer downpours, will rise as well.</p> <p>These are alarming possibilities. But geological evidence suggests the West has been struck by cataclysmic floods several times over the past millennium, and the new study provides the most advanced look yet at how this threat is evolving in the age of human-caused global warming.</p>

The researchers specifically considered hypothetical storms that are extreme but realistic, and which would probably strain California's flood preparations. According to their findings, powerful storms that once would not have been expected to occur in an average human lifetime are fast becoming ones with significant risks of happening during the span of a home mortgage.

"We got kind of lucky to avoid it in the 20th century," said Daniel L. Swain, a climate scientist at the University of California, Los Angeles, who prepared the new study with Xingying Huang of the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colo. "I would be very surprised to avoid it occurring in the 21st."

Unlike a giant earthquake, the other "Big One" threatening California, an atmospheric river superstorm will not sneak up on the state. Forecasters can now spot incoming atmospheric rivers five days to a week in advance, though they don't always know exactly where they'll hit or how intense they'll be.

Using Dr. Huang and Dr. Swain's findings, California hopes to be ready even earlier. Aided by supercomputers, state officials plan to map out how all that precipitation will work its way through rivers and over land. They will hunt for gaps in evacuation plans and emergency services.

The last time government agencies studied a hypothetical California megaflood, more than a decade ago, they estimated it could cause \$725 billion in property damage and economic disruption. That was three times the projected fallout from a severe San Andreas Fault earthquake, and five times the economic damage from Hurricane Katrina, which left much of New Orleans underwater for weeks in 2005.

Dr. Swain and Dr. Huang have handed California a new script for what could be one of its most challenging months in history. Now begin the dress rehearsals.

"Mother Nature has no obligation to wait for us," said Michael Anderson, California's state climatologist.

In fact, nature has not been wasting any time testing California's defenses. And when it comes to risks to the water system, carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is hardly the state's only foe.

THE ULTIMATE CURVEBALL

On Feb. 12, 2017, almost 190,000 people living north of Sacramento received an urgent order: Get out. Now. Part of the tallest dam in America was verging on collapse.

That day, Ronald Stork was in another part of the state, where he was worrying about precisely this kind of disaster — at a different dam.

Standing with binoculars near California's New Exchequer Dam, he dreaded what might happen if large amounts of water were ever sent through the dam's spillways. Mr. Stork, a policy expert with the conservation group Friends of the River, had seen on a previous visit to Exchequer that the nearby earth was fractured and could be easily eroded. If enough water rushed through, it might cause major erosion and destabilize the spillways.

He only learned later that his fears were playing out in real time, 150 miles north. At the Oroville Dam, a 770-foot-tall facility built in the 1960s, water from atmospheric rivers was washing away the soil and rock beneath the dam's emergency spillway, which is essentially a hillside next to the main chute that acts like an overflow drain in a bathtub. The top of the emergency spillway looked like it might buckle, which would send a wall of water cascading toward the cities below.

Mr. Stork had no idea this was happening until he got home to Sacramento and found his neighbor in a panic. The neighbor's mother lived downriver from Oroville. She didn't drive anymore. How was he going to get her out?

Mr. Stork had filed motions and written letters to officials, starting in 2001, about vulnerabilities at Oroville. People were now in danger because nobody had listened. "It was nearly soul crushing," he said.

“With flood hazard, it’s never the fastball that hits you,” said Nicholas Pinter, an earth scientist at the University of California, Davis. “It’s the curveball that comes from a direction you don’t anticipate. And Oroville was one of those.”

Such perils had lurked at Oroville for so long because California’s Department of Water Resources had been “overconfident and complacent” about its infrastructure, tending to react to problems rather than preempt them, independent investigators later wrote in a report. It is not clear this culture is changing, even as the 21st-century climate threatens to test the state’s aging dams in new ways. [One recent study](#) estimated that climate change had boosted precipitation from the 2017 storms at Oroville by up to 15 percent.

A year and a half after the crisis, crews were busy rebuilding Oroville’s emergency spillway when the federal hydropower regulator wrote to the state with some unsettling news: The reconstructed emergency spillway will not be big enough to safely handle the “probable maximum flood,” or the largest amount of water that might ever fall there.

This is the standard most major hydroelectric projects in the United States have to meet. The idea is that spillways should basically never fail because of excessive rain.

Today, [scientists say they believe](#) climate change might be increasing “probable maximum” precipitation levels at many dams. When the Oroville evacuation was ordered in 2017, nowhere near that much water had been flowing through the dam’s emergency spillway.

Yet California officials have downplayed these concerns about the capacity of Oroville’s emergency spillway, which were raised by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. Such extreme flows are a “remote” possibility, they argued in a letter last year. Therefore, further upgrades at Oroville aren’t urgently needed.

In a curt reply last month, the commission said this position was “not acceptable.” It gave the state until mid-September to submit a plan for addressing the issue.

The Department of Water Resources told The Times it would continue studying the matter. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission declined to comment.

“People could die,” Mr. Stork said. “And it bothers the hell out of me.”

WETTER WET YEARS

Donald G. Sullivan was lying in bed one night, early in his career as a scientist, when he realized his data might hold a startling secret.

For his master’s research at the University of California, Berkeley, he had sampled the sediment beneath a remote lake in the Sacramento Valley and was hoping to study the history of vegetation in the area. But a lot of the pollen in his sediment cores didn’t seem to be from nearby. How had it gotten there?

When he X-rayed the cores, he found layers where the sediment was denser. Maybe, he surmised, these layers were filled with sand and silt that had washed in during floods.

It was only late that night that he tried to estimate the ages of the layers. They lined up neatly with other records of West Coast megafloods.

“That’s when it clicked,” said Dr. Sullivan, who is now at the University of Denver.

His findings, from 1982, showed that major floods hadn’t been exceptionally rare occurrences over the past eight centuries. They took place every 100 to 200 years. And in the decades since, advancements in modeling have helped scientists evaluate how quickly the risks are rising because of climate change.

For their new study, which was published in the journal Science Advances, Dr. Huang and Dr. Swain replayed portions of the 20th and 21st centuries using 40 simulations of the global climate. Extreme weather events, by definition, don't occur very often. So by using computer models to create realistic alternate histories of the past, present and future climate, scientists can study a longer record of events than the real world offers.

Dr. Swain and Dr. Huang looked at all the monthlong California storms that took place during two time segments in the simulations, one in the recent past and the other in a future with high global warming, and chose one of the most intense events from each period. They then used a weather model to produce detailed play-by-plays of where and when the storms dump their water.

Those details matter. There are "so many different factors" that make an atmospheric river deadly or benign, Dr. Huang said.

In the high Sierras, for example, atmospheric rivers today largely bring snow. But higher temperatures are shifting the balance toward rain. Some of this rain can fall on snowpack that accumulated earlier, melting it and sending even more water toward towns and cities below.

Climate change might be affecting atmospheric rivers in other ways, too, said F. Martin Ralph of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California, San Diego. How strong their winds are, for instance. Or how long they last: Some storms stall, barraging an area for days on end, while others blow through quickly.

Scientists are also working to improve atmospheric river forecasts, which is no easy task as the West experiences increasingly sharp shifts from very dry conditions to very wet and back again. In October, strong storms broke records in Sacramento and other places. Yet this January through March was the driest in the Sierra Nevada in more than a century.

"My scientific gut says there's change happening," Dr. Ralph said. "And we just haven't quite pinned down how to detect it adequately."

Better forecasting is already helping California run some of its reservoirs more efficiently, a crucial step toward coping with wetter wet years and drier dry ones.

On the last day of 2016, Wes Monier was looking at forecasts on his iPad and getting a sinking feeling.

Mr. Monier is chief hydrologist for the Turlock Irrigation District, which operates the New Don Pedro Reservoir near Modesto. The Tuolumne River, where the Don Pedro sits, was coming out of its driest four years in a millennium. Now, some terrifying rainfall projections were rolling in.

First, 23.2 inches over the next 16 days. A day later: 28.8 inches. Then 37.1 inches, roughly what the area normally received in a full year.

If Mr. Monier started releasing Don Pedro's water too quickly, homes and farms downstream would flood. Release too much and he would be accused of squandering water that would be precious come summer.

But the forecasts helped him time his flood releases precisely enough that, after weeks of rain, the water in the dam ended up just shy of capacity. Barely a drop was wasted, although some orchards were flooded, and growers took a financial hit.

The next storm might be even bigger, though. And even the best data and forecasts might not allow Mr. Monier to stop it from causing destruction. "There's a point there where I can't do anything," he said.

KATRINA 2.0

How do you protect a place as vast as California from a storm as colossal as that? Two ways, said David Peterson, a veteran engineer. Change where the water goes, or change where the people are. Ideally, both. But neither is easy.

Firebaugh is a quiet, mostly Hispanic city of 8,100 people, one of many small communities that power the Central Valley's prodigious agricultural economy. Many residents work at nearby facilities that process almonds, pistachios, garlic and tomatoes.

Firebaugh also sits right on the San Joaquin River.

For a sleepless stretch of early 2017, Ben Gallegos, Firebaugh's city manager, did little but watch the river rise and debate whether to evacuate half the town. Water from winter storms had already turned the town's cherished rodeo grounds into a swamp. Now it was threatening homes, schools, churches and the wastewater treatment plant. If that flooded, people would be unable to flush their toilets. Raw sewage would flow down the San Joaquin.

Luckily, the river stopped rising. Still, the experience led Mr. Gallegos to apply for tens of millions in funding for new and improved levees around Firebaugh.

Levees change where the water goes, giving rivers more room to swell before they inundate the land. Levee failures in New Orleans were what turned Katrina into an epochal catastrophe, and after that storm, California toughened levee standards in urbanized areas of the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys, two major river basins of the Central Valley.

The idea is to keep people out of places where the levees don't protect against 200-year storms, or those with a 0.5 percent chance of occurring in any year. To account for rising seas and the shifting climate, California requires that levees be recertified as providing this level of defense at least every 20 years.

The problem is that once levees are strengthened, the areas behind them often become particularly attractive for development: fancier homes, bigger buildings, more people. The likelihood of a disaster is reduced, but the consequences, should one strike, are increased.

Federal agencies try to stop this by not funding infrastructure projects that induce growth in flood zones. But "it's almost impossible to generate the local funds to raise that levee if you don't facilitate some sort of growth behind the levee," Mr. Peterson said. "You need that economic activity to pay for the project," he said. "It puts you in a Catch-22."

A project to provide 200-year protection to the Mossdale Tract, a large area south of Stockton, one of the San Joaquin Valley's major cities, has been on pause for years because the Army Corps of Engineers fears it would spur growth, said Chris Elias, executive director of the San Joaquin Area Flood Control Agency, which is leading the project. City planners have agreed to freeze development across thousands of acres, but the Corps still hasn't given its final blessing.

The Corps and state and local agencies will begin studying how best to protect the area this fall, said Tyler M. Stalker, a spokesman for the Corps's Sacramento District.

The plodding pace of work in the San Joaquin Valley has set people on edge. At a recent public hearing in Stockton on flood risk, Mr. Elias stood up and highlighted some troubling math.

The Department of Water Resources says up to \$30 billion in investment is needed over the next 30 years to keep the Central Valley safe. Yet over the past 15 years, the state managed to spend only \$3.5 billion.

"We have to find ways to get ahead of the curve," Mr. Elias said. "We don't want to have a Katrina 2.0 play out right here in the heart of Stockton."

	As Mr. Elias waits for projects to be approved and budgets to come through, heat and moisture will continue to churn over the Pacific. Government agencies, battling the forces of inertia, indifference and delay, will make plans and update policies. And Stockton and the Central Valley, which runs through the heart of California, will count down the days and years until the inevitable storm.
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HEADLINE	08/15 New BA.4.6 subvariant: déjà vu nightmare?
SOURCE	https://www.thedailybeast.com/new-ba46-covid-variant-is-shaping-up-to-be-a-deja-vu-nightmare?ref=home
GIST	<p>The world has built up a lot of immunity in the nine months since the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus became dominant, driving a record wave of infections.</p> <p>That immunity from vaccines and past infection is helping to keep down hospitalizations and deaths even as Omicron’s offspring—a succession of subvariants—have become dominant, one after the other.</p> <p>Now the virus is trying to find a way around our antibodies. A new subvariant, BA.4.6, is beginning to outcompete its predecessor, BA.5. Its advantages include a particular mutation to the spike protein, the part of the virus that helps it to grab onto and infect our cells.</p> <p>We’ve seen this R346T mutation before. And every time it’s appeared, it’s been associated with forms of the SARS-CoV-2 pathogen with an increased ability to dodge our antibodies. A quality epidemiologists call “immune escape.”</p> <p>If BA.4.6 becomes dominant, it could reverse the encouraging trend we’ve seen in most countries in recent weeks toward fewer infections, fewer hospitalizations, fewer deaths.</p> <p>It’s a reminder that the novel coronavirus is a living, evolving thing. As we adapt to it, it adapts to us. “Viruses in general mutate to be more infectious and to avoid our immunity,” Ali Mokdad, a professor of health metrics sciences at the University of Washington Institute for Health, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>Don’t panic quite yet. “One thing I try not to do is get too excited for every new variant that pops up,” Peter Hotez, an expert in vaccine development at Baylor College, told The Daily Beast.</p> <p>Most coronavirus variants and subvariants appear and disappear without significantly changing the pandemic’s overall direction. Plus, there’s a new kind of vaccine in the works that could help us to fight, long-term, even the worst forms of COVID. <i>Eventually.</i></p> <p>All the same, BA.4.6 warrants close attention. It’s the seventh major subvariant of Omicron, which first appeared in Africa back in November. It spread fast, outcompeting and replacing the previous major variant, Delta. Epidemiologists have described Omicron and its subvariants as the most contagious respiratory viruses they’ve ever seen.</p> <p>Omicron is four times as transmissible as Delta but half as lethal. So Omicron resulted in the worst-ever day for new COVID infections when a record 4.1 million people got sick on Jan. 19. That’s a fivefold increase over Delta’s worst day back in April last year.</p> <p>But just 13,000 people died on the worst day for Omicron deaths on Feb. 9—thousands fewer than died on Delta’s most lethal day back in January 2021.</p> <p>It’s not hard to explain the growing gap between infections and deaths as the pandemic grinds toward its fourth year. Billions of people have been at least partially vaccinated. Billions have caught COVID and survived. The combination of vaccine-induced and natural antibodies has created a global wall of immunity that has blunted the worst outcomes.</p> <p>But with BA.4.6, the virus is trying to find a way around that wall. “There’s a huge selective pressure for immune escape, especially now that the great majority of the population has some degree of immunity,</p>

from immunization, infection or both,” Keith Jerome, a University of Washington virologist, told The Daily Beast.

SARS-CoV-2 is, in essence, fighting for its own survival—trying out mutations until it settles on one that might give it the upper hand.

[R346T is one of those mutations](#). It’s not totally clear how the virus came up with the change. It’s possible Omicron mixed with an older form of SARS-CoV-2 in a person who’s gotten sick more than once. It’s possible, in other words, that BA.4.6 is a “recombinant” subvariant that picked up its most advantageous quality from one of its predecessors.

That one change to the spike protein appears to make the virus somewhat harder for our antibodies to recognize. With R346T, the virus has a better chance of slipping right past our immune systems and causing an infection. Even if we’ve been vaccinated. Even if we’ve also caught and gotten over COVID in the past.

Greater immune escape means more and worse infections. We’ve been lucky with Omicron in the sense that, even as the variant and its subvariants have driven back-to-back-to-back waves in cases since November, hospitalizations and deaths haven’t risen in proportion.

It’s still an open question how much worse BA.4.6 might be and how far it might spread. Health agencies all over the world have been tracking the subvariant for months now. As BA.5 cases plateau, BA.4.6 is outcompeting BA.5—but not everywhere.

The BA.4.6 hotspots include some Australian states and parts of the U.S. Midwest. So far, BA.4.6 accounts for around four percent of new cases in the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom.

The proportion of BA.4.6 is set to rise as BA.5 declines. BA.4.6 appears to have only [a 10-percent growth advantage](#) over BA.5, but that advantage has been growing over time.

If there’s good news in BA.4.6’s rise, it’s that for all its worrying mutations it’s still an Omicron sublineage—and still has a lot of mutations in common with BA.5, BA.4, BA.2 and BA.1.

That means the Omicron-specific boosters that Pfizer and Moderna are developing for their messenger-RNA vaccines, and which U.S. regulators are on track to approve in coming weeks, should still work at least somewhat against BA.4.6.

BA.4.6 isn’t the worst case scenario. That would be a subvariant—or brand-new variant—with strong immune escape, a form of SARS-CoV-2 that has mutated so much that all those antibodies we’ve built up over the past three years barely recognize it.

The epidemiological community is divided over how likely this variant is to evolve. Some are confident that respiratory viruses such as the flu and the novel coronavirus tend to get overall milder over time as they become “endemic”—that is, always present but usually manageable.

Others fear near-total immune escape is all but inevitable for cleverer viruses as they tirelessly fight to survive. “This idea that each subsequent variant causes less severe illness—I don’t buy that,” Hotez said.

“The virus has been very successful so far.”

It comes down to genetics—the virus trading one quality for another as it strives to spread to more and more hosts. “The trick for the virus is to find a way to escape immunity while still maintaining the ability to infect new people efficiently,” Jerome explained.

“The virus has been very successful so far at doing so, but the big question is whether it can continue to do so, or instead will ultimately exhaust all the possible tricks to do so, and settle down into a more manageable level of endemicity. There’s no way to know for sure yet.”

	<p>A variant or subvariant with near-total immune escape could drag us back to the most terrifying days of the early pandemic, when almost no one had immunity—or any way of developing immunity without surviving a very dangerous infection.</p> <p>But BA.4.6 with its R346T mutation and potential for immune escape might be a preview of that worst-case scenario. It might also be an argument for the pharmaceutical industry and health agencies to redouble their efforts to create universal vaccines that work against SARS-CoV-2 and every other major coronavirus, of which there are scores.</p> <p>There are around a dozen major “pan-coronavirus” vaccines in development. The two leading efforts are at the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations in Norway and the U.S. government’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases.</p> <p>They’re spending \$200 million and \$43 million, respectively, to develop their new universal jabs. Trials are still months, if not years, away. “We’re moving piecemeal toward a more universal coronavirus vaccine,” Hotez said.</p> <p>Pan-coronavirus vaccines might be slightly less effective than the best mRNA vaccines were at their peak effectiveness (against serious illness and death) of more than 90 percent, back in late 2020.</p> <p>But they’d be broadly effective, keeping people alive and out of the hospital even as the virus mutates again and again in order to survive.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Las Vegas wettest monsoon in decade
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/13/vegas-wettest-monsoon-decade-floods-casinos-and-le/
GIST	<p>Heavy rains in Las Vegas Thursday produced flash flooding that saw casinos soaked and two people dead.</p> <p>After the floodwaters receded, Clark County Fire Department reported that two lifeless bodies were found in the city’s flood channels, according to the New York Post.</p> <p>One was located around Las Vegas Boulevard Thursday night, and another was uncovered near the southern tip of the Las Vegas Strip on Friday morning.</p> <p>The exact cause of death for the two victims, and whether or not the flood was related to said deaths, has not yet been determined.</p> <p>Las Vegas Department of Public Safety personnel also dealt with three stalled cars, a downed tree, and ceiling damage at an apartment complex, as reported by the New York Post.</p> <p>All occupants of the stalled vehicles were evacuated safely.</p> <p>Video on social media showed water flooding a parking structure near The Linq hotel, and water falling on visitors in the Planet Hollywood and Caesars Palace casinos.</p> <p>“The sheer amount of water made one of my friends very nervous – she was very concerned about the possibility of more water coming in or a partial ceiling collapse,” tourist Richard Henderson told the New York Post.</p> <p>The National Weather Service reported on Twitter that this monsoon season is the most intense Las Vegas has seen in a decade —1.28 inches of rain have fallen thus far in the 2022 season, which the NWS indicates lasts from June 15 to Sept. 30.</p>

	<p>The 2012 monsoon season saw 3.63” of rainfall, according to the NWS infographic. Las Vegas normally receives 4.2” of rain per year, per the New York Post.</p> <p>The rain shows no signs of letting up anytime soon.</p> <p>“There’s really no sign of the monsoon letting up anytime soon, so we’re going to continue to see the chance of scattered showers and thunderstorms each afternoon and evening,” meteorologist Brian Planz told the Associated Press.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Japan economy grows; consumer spending
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/japan-ekes-growth-consumers-splurge-amid-covid-surge-88382043
GIST	<p>TOKYO -- Japan’s economy grew at an annual rate of 2.2% in the April-June quarter, the government said Monday, as consumer spending rebounded with the gradual lifting of pandemic precautions.</p> <p>After keeping its borders closed to most travelers throughout the pandemic, Japan has slowly begun reopening to tourism, as meanwhile business has returned more or less to normal after various voluntary restrictions were eased.</p> <p>That means families are venturing out and spending more, even as coronavirus infection rates have soared with the spread of the omicron variant of COVID-19.</p> <p>A revised estimate put growth for the world's third-largest economy as flat in the first quarter of the year, upgraded from an earlier reading of a 0.5% contraction. The reading for the last quarter was below forecasts for 2.5% annual growth. In quarterly terms, the economy expanded 0.5%, surpassing its pre-pandemic size but slightly weaker than analysts had expected.</p> <p>“Nevertheless, it suggests that pent-up demand from COVID-19 reopening could continue to underpin growth ahead,” Jun Rong Yeap of IG said in a commentary.</p> <p>Private consumption jumped at an annual rate of 4.6% but appeared to be constrained by surging prices.</p> <p>After decades of fighting deflation, or weakening prices and wages, soaring global costs for energy and other commodities are hitting Japanese pocketbooks and balance sheets. Japan imports nearly all of its oil, gas and coal as well as food and industrial components used in manufacturing.</p> <p>The inflation rate remains relatively low. The Bank of Japan's most recent estimate for the fiscal year through March 2023 is for 2.3% consumer inflation, way below the recent four-decade high levels of 8%-9% in the U.S. that now show signs of easing.</p> <p>But the Japanese yen also has weakened, to two-decade lows against the dollar, making imports relatively more expensive. On Monday, the dollar was trading at about 133 yen. It recently surged to nearly 140 yen.</p> <p>Experts attribute the dramatic surge in COVID-19 cases in recent weeks to record highs to a greater availability of tests, more transmissible variants and many Japanese being under-vaccinated even if shots are readily available.</p> <p>It has added to uncertainty over the outlook. Some analysts think Japan’s economic growth will drop again in the July-September period.</p> <p>“After a much brighter spring, we think the economy will slow again this quarter on the back of weaker consumer spending due to rising COVID-19 infections,” said Takayuki Toji, an economist at SuMi TRUST, said in a report.</p>

	<p>Much depends on what happens elsewhere, especially in China, a huge source of demand for Japanese exports. Efforts by Chinese authorities to stamp out COVID-19 by shutting down businesses, neighborhoods and sometimes whole cities, have dented growth and caused disruptions to manufacturing throughout the region.</p> <p>“Exports should be supported by the lifting of the urban blockade in China and capital investment should remain firm but slowing global growth due to monetary tightening in the U.S. and Europe will take its toll,” Toji said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 China cuts interest rate to bolster economy
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/china-cuts-interest-rate-shore-sagging-economy-88383286
GIST	<p>BEIJING -- China’s central bank trimmed a key interest rate Monday to shore up sagging economic growth at a politically sensitive time when President Xi Jinping is trying to extend his hold on power.</p> <p>The decision suggested Beijing is temporarily setting aside worries over high debt to act to head off a slump before Xi is expected to try to award himself a third five-year term as Communist Party leader at a meeting this fall.</p> <p>The ruling party has effectively acknowledged it cannot hit this year’s official 5.5% growth target after anti-virus curbs disrupted trade, manufacturing and consumer spending. A crackdown on excessive borrowing in China's vast real estate industry triggered a plunge in home sales and construction.</p> <p>“The momentum of economic recovery has slowed,” a government spokesman, Fu Linghui, said at a news conference. “More efforts are needed to consolidate the foundation of economic recovery.”</p> <p>The People's Bank of China cut its rate on a one-year loan to 2.75% from 2.85% and injected an extra 400 billion yuan (\$60 billion) into lending markets after growth in factory output and retail sales weakened in July and home sales fell by double digits.</p> <p>The central bank “seems to have decided it now has a more pressing problem,” Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a report.</p> <p>The slowdown adds to political headwinds for Xi, China's most powerful leader since at least the 1980s. He still is widely expected to succeed, but some analysts say he might be forced to compromise by sharing more of his sweeping powers with other party leaders.</p> <p>Despite downward pressure on growth, party leaders affirmed their commitment to the severe “zero-COVID” strategy in a July 29 statement. It dropped previous references to growth targets after the economy grew by just 2.5% over a year earlier in the first half of 2022.</p> <p>Growth in factory output in July slowed to 3.8% over a year ago, down 0.1 percentage point from the previous month, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. Growth in consumer spending fell to 2.7%, down 0.4 percentage points from June.</p> <p>Sales of housing and other commercial real estate fell 28.8% from a year earlier.</p> <p>Beijing is forcing developers to reduce debt levels, which caused economic growth to plunge in mid-2021, disrupting a recovery from the coronavirus pandemic. The crackdown has bankrupted smaller developers and fueled fears of a default by the biggest, Evergrande Group, which owes \$310 billion to banks and bondholders.</p> <p>The “downward trend” in real estate has a "great impact on economic growth,” said Fu, the government spokesman.</p>

	<p>The rate cut and extra money for lending are small compared with China's \$17 trillion-a-year economy, the world's second-largest. Instead, such changes are widely seen as a signal to the state-owned banking industry to lend more and cut charges for commercial borrowers.</p> <p>The ruling party is struggling to revive activity after Shanghai, the country's business capital, and other industrial centers were shut for weeks starting in late March to fight virus outbreaks.</p> <p>Managers of the Shanghai port, the world's busiest, say shipping is back to normal, but economists say it might be months before the flow of smartphones, home appliances, consumer electronics and other goods through complex supply lines fully recovers.</p> <p>A survey of manufacturers released earlier showed activity in July contracted. Indicators of new orders, exports and employment declined.</p> <p>Retails sales were off 0.7% from a year earlier in the first half after plunging 11% in April following the temporary shutdown of Shanghai and other cities.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Boredom, loneliness plague Ukraine youth
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/boredom-loneliness-plague-ukrainian-youth-front-line-88388510
GIST	<p>SLOVIANSK, Ukraine -- Anastasiia Aleksandrova doesn't even look up from her phone when the thunder of nearby artillery booms through the modest home the 12-year-old shares with her grandparents on the outskirts of Sloviansk in eastern Ukraine.</p> <p>With no one her age left in her neighborhood and classes only online since Russia's invasion, video games and social media have taken the place of the walks and bike rides she once enjoyed with friends who have since fled.</p> <p>"She communicates less and goes out walking less. She usually stays at home playing games on her phone," Anastasiia's grandmother, Olena Aleksandrova, 57, said of the shy, lanky girl who likes to paint and has a picture of a Siberian tiger hanging on the wall of her bedroom.</p> <p>Anastasiia's retreat into digital technology to cope with the isolation and stress of war that rages on the front line just seven miles (12 kilometers) away is increasingly common among young people in Ukraine's embattled Donetsk region.</p> <p>With cities largely emptied after hundreds of thousands have evacuated to safety, the young people who remain face loneliness and boredom as painful counterpoints to the fear and violence Moscow has unleashed on Ukraine.</p> <p>"I don't have anyone to hang out with. I sit with the phone all day," Anastasiia said from the bank of a lake where she sometimes swims with her grandparents. "My friends left and my life has changed. It became worse due to this war."</p> <p>More than 6 million Ukrainians, overwhelmingly women and children, have fled the country and millions more are internally displaced, according to the U.N. refugee agency.</p> <p>The mass displacement has upended countless childhoods, not only for those having to start a new life after seeking safety elsewhere, but also for the thousands who stayed behind.</p> <p>In the industrial city of Kramatorsk, seven miles (12 kilometers) south of Sloviansk, the friendship between 19-year-old Roman Kovalenko and 18-year-old Oleksandr Pruzhyna has become closer as all of their other friends have left the city.</p>

The two teenagers walk together through the mostly deserted city, sitting to talk on park benches. Both described being cut off from the social lives they enjoyed before the war.

"It's a completely different feeling when you go outside. There is almost no one on the streets, I have the feeling of being in an apocalypse," said Pruzhyna, who lost his job at a barber shop after the invasion and now spends most of his time at home playing computer games.

"I feel like everything I was going to do became impossible, everything collapsed in an instant."

Of the roughly 275,000 children age 17 or younger in the Donetsk region before Russia's invasion, just 40,000 remain, the province's regional governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told The Associated Press last week.

According to official figures, 361 children have been killed in Ukraine since Russia launched its war on Feb. 24, and 711 others have been injured.

Authorities are urging all remaining families in Donetsk, but especially those with children, to evacuate immediately as Russian forces continue to bombard civilian areas as they press for control of the region.

A special police force has been tasked with individually contacting households with children and urging them to flee to safer areas, Kyrylenko said.

"As a father, I feel that children should not be in the Donetsk region," he said. "This is an active war zone."

In Kramatorsk, 16-year-old Sofia Mariia Bondar spends most days sitting in the shoe section of a clothing shop where her mother works.

A pianist and singer who wants to study art at university after she finishes her final year of high school, Sofia Mariia said there is "nowhere to go and nothing to do" now that her friends have left.

"I wish I could go back in time and make everything like it was before. I understand that most of my friends who left will never come back, no matter what happens in the future," she said. "Of course it's very sad that I can't have all the fun like other teenagers do, but I can't do anything about it, only cope with it."

Her mother, Viktoriia, said that since the city has mostly emptied out, she manages to sell only one or two items per week.

But with the danger of shelling and soldiers plying the streets, her daughter is no longer allowed to go out alone and spends most of her time by her mother's side in the store or at their home on the outskirts of Kramatorsk where the threat of rocket strikes is lower.

"I keep her near me all the time so that in case something happens, at least we will be together," she said.

Of the roughly 18,000 school-age children in Kramatorsk before Russia's invasion, only around 3,200 remain, including 600 preschoolers, said the city's head of military administration, Oleksandr Goncharenko.

While officials continue to push residents to evacuate and provide information on transportation and accommodation, "parents cannot be forced to leave with their children," Goncharenko said. When the school semester begins on Sept. 1, he said lessons will be offered online for those who stay.

In Kramatorsk's verdant but nearly empty Pushkin Park, Rodion Kucherian, 14, performed tricks on his scooter on an otherwise deserted set of ramps, quarter pipes and grind rails.

	<p>Before the war, he said, he and his friends would do tricks in the bustling park alongside many other children. But now his only connection to his friends — who have fled to countries like Poland and Germany — is on social media.</p> <p>He’s taken up other solitary activities just to keep himself busy, he said.</p> <p>“It’s very sad not to see my friends. I haven’t seen my best friend for more than four months,” he said. “I started cycling at home so I don’t miss them as much.”</p> <p>In Sloviansk, 12-year-old Anastasiia said she can’t remember the last time she played with someone her own age, but she’s made some new friends through the games she plays online.</p> <p>“It’s not the same. It’s way better to go outside to play with your friends than just talking online,” she said.</p> <p>Her best friend, Yeva, used to live on her street, but has evacuated with her family to Lviv in western Ukraine.</p> <p>Anastasiia wears a silver pendant around her neck — half of a broken heart with the word “Love” engraved on the front — and Yeva, she said, wears the other half.</p> <p>“I never take it off, and Yeva doesn’t either,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 SKorea offers North aid if it denuclearizes
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/korea-offers-north-economic-benefits-denuclearization-88384187
GIST	<p>SEOUL, South Korea -- South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol on Monday offered “audacious” economic assistance to North Korea if it abandons its nuclear weapons program while avoiding harsh criticism of the North days after it threatened “deadly” retaliation over the COVID-19 outbreak it blames on the South.</p> <p>In a speech celebrating the end of Japan’s colonization of the Korean Peninsula, Yoon also called for better ties with Japan, calling the two countries partners in navigating challenges to freedom and saying their shared values will help them overcome historical grievances linked to Japan’s brutal colonial rule before the end of World War II.</p> <p>Yoon’s televised speech on the liberation holiday came days after North Korea claimed a widely disputed victory over COVID-19 but also blamed Seoul for the outbreak. The North insists leaflets and other objects flown across the border by activists spread the virus, an unscientific claim Seoul describes as “ridiculous.”</p> <p>North Korea has a history of dialing up pressure on the South when it doesn’t get what it wants from the United States, and there are concerns that North Korea’s threat portends a provocation, which could possibly be a nuclear or major missile test or even border skirmishes. Some experts say the North may stir up tensions around joint military exercises the United States and South Korea start next week.</p> <p>Yoon, a conservative who took office in May, said North Korea’s denuclearization would be key for peace in the region and the world. If North Korea halts its nuclear weapons development and genuinely commits to a process of denuclearization, the South will respond with huge economic rewards that would be provided in phases, Yoon said.</p> <p>Yoon’s proposal wasn’t meaningfully different from previous South Korean offers that have already been rejected by North Korea, which has been accelerating its efforts to expand its nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles program leader Kim Jong Un sees as his strongest guarantee of survival.</p>

“We will implement a large-scale program to provide food, providing assistance for establishing infrastructure for the production, transmission and distribution of electrical power, and carry out projects to modernize ports and airports to facilitate trade,” Yoon said.

“We will also help improve North Korea’s agricultural production, provide assistance to modernize its hospitals and medical infrastructure, and carry out initiatives to allow for international investment and financial support,” he added, insisting that such programs would “significantly” improve North Korean lives.

Inter-Korean ties have deteriorated amid a stalemate in larger nuclear negotiations between Washington and Pyongyang, which derailed in early 2019 over disagreements in exchanging a release of crippling U.S.-led sanctions against the North and the North’s disarmament steps.

North Korea has ramped up its testing activity in 2022, launching more than 30 ballistic missiles so far, including its first demonstrations of intercontinental ballistic missiles since 2017. Experts say Kim is intent on exploiting a favorable environment to push forward his weapons program, with the U.N. Security Council divided and effectively paralyzed over Russia’s war on Ukraine.

North Korea’s unusually fast pace in weapons demonstrations also underscore brinkmanship aimed at forcing Washington to accept the idea of North Korea as a nuclear power and negotiating badly economic benefits and security concessions from a position of strength, experts say. The U.S. and South Korean governments have also said the North is gearing up to conduct its first nuclear test since September 2017, when it claimed to have detonated a nuclear warhead designed for its ICBMs.

In face of growing North Korean threats, Yoon has vowed to bolster South Korea’s defense in conjunction with its alliance with the United States and also strengthen security ties with Japan, which is also alarmed by the North’s nuclear and ballistic weapons program.

South Korea’s relations with Japan declined to post-war lows over the past several years as the countries allowed their grievances over history to extend to other areas including trade and military cooperation.

While Yoon has called for future-oriented cooperation with Japan, history may continue to pose an obstacle to relations. The countries have struggled to negotiate a solution after Japanese companies rejected South Korean court rulings in recent years to compensate South Koreans who were subject to wartime industrial slavery, an issue that could cause further diplomatic rupture if it results in the forced sales of the companies’ local assets. Even as Yoon called for improved bilateral relations, his foreign ministry issued a statement expressing “deep disappointment and regret” after three members of Japan’s Cabinet visited and prayed at Yasukuni Shrine, which honors Japanese war dead including some war criminals. The shrine is seen in South Korea as a symbol of Japanese militarism.

“In the past, we had to unshackle ourselves from Imperial Japan’s political control and defend our freedom. Today, Japan is our partner as we face common threats that challenge the freedom of global citizens,” Yoon said. “When South Korea and Japan move toward a common future and when the mission of our times align, based on our shared universal values, it will also help us solve the historical problems that exist between our two countries.”

While Washington has said it would push for additional sanctions if North Korea conducts another nuclear test, the prospects for meaningful punitive measures are unclear. China and Russia recently vetoed U.S.-sponsored resolutions at the U.N. Security Council that would have increased sanctions on the North over its ballistic missile testing this year.

North Korea’s state media said Monday that Kim exchanged messages with Russian President Vladimir Putin and celebrated their strengthening ties.

Kim said the countries’ relations were forged by the Soviet contributions in Japan’s World War II defeat and that they were strengthening their “strategic and tactical cooperation and support and solidarity” in the

	<p>face of enemies' military threats. Putin said closer ties between the countries would help bring stability to the region, the North's official Korean Central News Agency said.</p> <p>North Korea has repeatedly blamed the United States for the crisis in Ukraine, claiming the West's "hegemonic policy" justified Russia's offensive in Ukraine to protect itself.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 US Congressional delegation visits Taiwan
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/taiwan-china-nancy-pelosi-government-and-politics-143aebea0f425aaaaabaa72b40e53bc1
GIST	<p>TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP) — A delegation of American lawmakers is visiting Taiwan just 12 days after a visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that angered China.</p> <p>The five-member delegation, led by Democratic Sen. Ed Markey of Massachusetts, will meet senior leaders to discuss U.S.-Taiwan relations, regional security, trade, investment and other issues, the American Institute in Taiwan said. The institute represents the U.S. government, which does not have official ties with Taiwan.</p> <p>China, which claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory, responded to Pelosi's Aug. 2 visit by sending missiles, warships and warplanes into the seas and skies around Taiwan for several days afterward. The Chinese government objects to Taiwan having any official contact with foreign governments, particularly with a high-ranking congressional leader like Pelosi.</p> <p>A Taiwanese broadcaster showed video of a U.S. government plane landing about 7 p.m. Sunday at Songshan Airport in Taipei, the Taiwanese capital. While it wasn't confirmed who was on board, the American Institute issued a brief statement soon after announcing the delegation would be in Taiwan on Sunday and Monday as part of a trip to Asia.</p> <p>The other members of the delegation are Republican Rep. Aumua Amata Coleman Radewagen, a delegate from American Samoa, and Democratic House members John Garamendi and Alan Lowenthal from California and Don Beyer from Virginia.</p> <p>Chinese warplanes have been crossing the midpoint of the Taiwan Strait on a daily basis even after the conclusion of the military exercises, with at least 10 doing so on Sunday, Taiwan's Defense Ministry said.</p> <p>The 10 fighter jets were among 22 Chinese military aircraft and six naval ships detected in the area around Taiwan by 5 p.m. on Sunday, the ministry said on its Twitter account.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Omicron variant a milder coronavirus?
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/health/medical/omicron-is-considered-a-milder-coronavirus-but-scientists-arent-so-sure/ar-AA10AMsR
GIST	<p>For more than two years, Cathy Baron and Sara Alicia Costa managed to duck the coronavirus. But despite their being fully vaccinated and boosted, the Omicron variant finally caught them.</p> <p>Baron is an actress and dance instructor who lives in Santa Monica. Costa is an architect in Austin, Texas. Both are 40 and healthy. But the two friends saw two very different sides of the variant they expected to be gentler on its victims than earlier strains.</p> <p>For Costa, the Omicron variant lived up to its reputation for mildness, causing headaches and "something like a crummy cold" for a couple of days. She was visiting Baron and surfing in Santa Monica a week after testing positive.</p>

Baron's illness was deeply chastening. She was flattened for several days with a high fever and debilitating muscle aches and was too exhausted to teach her pole dancing class for three weeks. Two months later, she's still coping with fatigue, brain fog and episodic coughing fits. She hopes never to repeat the experience.

Baron and Costa are what scientists would dismiss as an "n of 2." If their experience were a study, the sample size would be far too small to draw any conclusions, especially one as important as whether the Omicron variant really is less virulent than the SARS-CoV-2 variants that came before it.

And yet, their contrasting experiences are as telling as many of the research studies conducted to date that have tried to determine how dangerous Omicron really is.

"It's an excellent question," said [Dr. Stanley Perlman](#), a University of Iowa virologist and a leading expert on coronaviruses. Many researchers think they know the answer, and "I think it's true" that the Omicron variant is causing milder illnesses, he said. But the true picture is "not clear," he cautioned.

Omicron arrived in the United States at a time when 60% of Americans had the protection of COVID-19 vaccines and roughly a third of Americans (including some who'd been vaccinated) had a past infection. Not only was there a high level of population immunity, those who did become ill had access to treatments that weren't available to people sickened by the initial strain from Wuhan, China, or the Alpha and Delta variants that followed.

Perhaps these are the reasons why those infected with Omicron have tended to experience milder illnesses. "It's widely said that Omicron is inherently less pathogenic, but there is no real evidence for that," said [Dr. Christopher Chiu](#), a COVID-19 researcher at Imperial College London.

"Comparisons with Delta are like apples and oranges," he said. "Delta was circulating at a time when many were still not vaccinated or previously infected. In contrast, Omicron is largely causing breakthrough infections in people who already have partial protection from immunity conferred by vaccines or infection."

Since [its earliest appearance](#) in November, researchers have seen that compared with previous variants, Omicron was less likely to send infected people to the hospital or to their graves.

First in South Africa and later in communities across America, the new variant [bucked expectations](#) spawned by earlier surges. In the two to three weeks after Omicron cases spiked, hospitalizations and deaths rose as well — but more slowly, and they'd topped out at lower levels.

Still, as Americans have learned from hard experience, the Omicron variant is a highly capable killer. [Just over 200,000](#) of the country's COVID-19 deaths are likely attributable to some version of the Omicron variant, which arrived here around Thanksgiving and became dominant in January.

And don't forget, Perlman added: It's [still killing](#) some 400 people a day in the United States.

How much of Omicron's supposed mildness should be credited to the protective effect of vaccines is not really known.

During June, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [concluded](#) that COVID-associated hospitalizations among unvaccinated adults were 4.6 times higher than they were among vaccinated people. But the picture is muddier than such data would suggest.

Americans' immune profiles run the gamut, making it hard to slot people into neat categories and compare how they fared when infected by different variants. Those who've been vaccinated are experiencing various degrees of waning immunity, even if they've been boosted. The same goes for people who've recovered from infections. The readiness of their immune systems depends on how long ago they had the

infection, what variant infected them, their vaccination status, and factors like age and the medications they take.

With so many variables to consider, it's hard for researchers to draw a clean comparison between Omicron and its predecessors. But they've tried.

In one [study](#) published in Nature, scientists showed that Omicron was drawn to a wide range of human tissues. When observed in petri dishes, the variant established itself in cells that mimicked the upper airways of the respiratory system, though with less gusto than the Delta variant. In addition, Omicron was far less adept at infecting lower airway cells, including lung tissue, than either Delta or the original SARS-CoV-2 strain that left Wuhan.

And in studies that infected animals such as [hamsters](#) and [genetically engineered mice](#), the Omicron variant caused less weight loss (a proxy of severe disease) and touched off less inflammation in the lungs than either Delta or the original strain.

Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that coronavirus testing was undergoing sweeping changes just as the Omicron variant took hold. As at-home testing ramped up and fewer new infections were reported to public health agencies, the relationship between cases on the one hand and hospitalizations and deaths on the other — a previously dependable measure of a variant's ability to sicken — [became less reliable](#).

The Omicron variant's astonishing infectiousness and propensity to spin off new subvariants complicate the picture even more. In a recent meeting convened by the Food and Drug Administration, even experts from the agency [shrugged](#) when asked to compare the subvariants.

Collectively, those Omicron subvariants muscled Delta aside so quickly that doctors and researchers didn't have time to collect groups of similar patients, genetically sequence the viruses that infected them, and compare how their illnesses proceeded.

That's the kind of study that might shed light on the divergent experiences of Cathy Baron and Sara Alicia Costa. They're a seemingly well-matched pair of healthy 40-year-old women, yet Omicron attacked one of them like a lion and treated the other like a lamb. With the experiences of hundreds or thousands of people thrown in, such research might reveal factors that nudge an Omicron infection in one direction or the other.

There is a more direct way to learn how Omicron compares to earlier variants in its ability to sicken and kill. Researchers could [deliberately infect volunteers](#) with different versions of the coronavirus and track their physiological responses to infection over the course of an illness.

Chiu and his colleagues at Imperial College London have just such an undertaking in mind. They are planning "human challenge" studies involving the Delta and Omicron variants to mirror [one already conducted](#) with the original version of the virus.

The resulting data could yield a clearer picture of exactly how Omicron behaves in healthy humans, and how a prior infection or different levels of vaccination affect an individual's illness.

Chiu said a new study would seek to enroll people who gained immunity through vaccination, a past infection, or a combination of both. That would give them more insight into whether so-called hybrid immunity is an important bulwark against becoming sick in the Omicron era.

If research confirms that the Omicron variant is indeed milder than its predecessors, and that getting it confers some protection from future illness, some may conclude it's time to let the virus spread. Baron would take some convincing of that.

"When people say, 'let's just let it rip' and allow ourselves to get infected over and over again — that's scary to me," she said. "I don't want to just let it rip. I don't want to get it again."

HEADLINE	08/14 Labor shortage vexing challenge economy
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/labor-shortage-is-vexing-challenge-for-u-s-economy-11660469401?mod=hp_lead_pos4
GIST	<p>As anyone who has lost luggage or waited half an hour for a restaurant check can tell you, America needs way more workers in some parts of the economy.</p> <p>Economists think so too. Many of them see the imbalance in labor supply and demand as at the heart of the U.S.'s current economic challenges. They say that fixing it is critical to achieving a so-called soft economic landing, in which the highest inflation in four decades comes down without unemployment rising enough to trigger a recession.</p> <p>A key part of the equation has been moving in the wrong direction: The supply of workers has been shrinking. The labor force is about 600,000 smaller than in early 2020, when Covid-19 triggered a deep but short recession. It is several million smaller if you adjust for the increase in population. After approaching prepandemic levels earlier this year, the number of workers has fallen since March by 400,000, according to Labor Department data.</p> <p>The labor-force participation rate—the share of the population 16 years and older working or seeking work—was 62.1% in July, down from 62.4% in March, and much lower than the prepandemic rate of 63.4%, the Labor Department said.</p> <p>In the short term, stalled labor-supply improvement is a concern because it increases the risk of a more damaging recession in the next year or two.</p> <p>“The hope for many to achieve a soft landing is that you meet in the middle, with demand cooling off and labor supply picking up, and we reach a much healthier equilibrium between the two,” said Michael Pugliese, economist at Wells Fargo. “But if labor supply flatlines or keeps falling, you need to bring demand down even more in order to cool off wage growth.”</p> <p>Inflation is near a four-decade high, coming in at 8.5% in July, and the imbalances in the labor market are part of the reason. Energy shortages and logistics glitches have faded some as sources of inflation, but price pressures fueled by a tight labor market are replacing them. Wages and salaries for private-sector workers rose 5.7% in the second quarter from a year earlier, the swiftest pace since records began in 2001, and wage growth accelerated in July.</p> <p>That is an uncomfortable situation for the Fed. It is currently trying to bring inflation back to its 2% goal by raising interest rates. The hope is to cool the economy and create more labor-market slack, influencing the demand part of the equation. Usually this requires an increase in unemployment. But with job openings unusually high, it is theoretically possible to cool demand without triggering mass layoffs.</p> <p>That so far appears to be happening. Unemployment claims have risen to their highest levels this year, suggesting it is becoming slightly harder for laid-off workers to find new jobs. Job openings are down nearly 10% from March levels, though they remain historically high and well above the number of unemployed people looking for work.</p> <p>To ease wage pressures without having to reduce employment outright, though, more workers are needed to fill jobs.</p> <p>Without them, said Mr. Pugliese, the Fed will have to work harder to reduce labor demand by raising interest rates more, creating a greater chance that much tighter financial conditions trigger mass layoffs and a recession.</p>

Stagnant labor supply is also a long-term worry, because a limited supply of workers could constrain the economy's growth potential in the long term. An undersized labor force means fewer workers to build cars or clean hotel rooms, limiting how much actual output the economy can produce. Departures from the labor force tend to be "sticky," meaning that those who drop out for a considerable time can find it hard to return.

Some of the decline in labor supply [is due to increased retirement](#) decisions triggered by Covid-19. Among those 55 and up, 38.7% were working or looking for work in July, down from 40.3% before the pandemic. [Slowing immigration](#) was a factor weighing on the size of the labor force early in the pandemic. It is less so now but isn't likely to become a source of labor-force growth. After dropping sharply, visa issuance has risen nearly to prepandemic levels, according to BCA Research analysis of State Department data.

Economists have long anticipated this decline as the U.S. population ages. Far more mysterious is what is holding back the rest of the workforce. The participation rate among those ages 16 to 54 was 76.1% in July, compared with 77% in February 2020. Reasons suspected as recently as a year ago—[trillions of dollars in pandemic aid](#), [fear of Covid-19](#), and [child-care obligations](#)—have either not been borne out or are no longer an issue to most.

"The big mystery is not around old versus young, men versus women. It's around skilled and unskilled workers," said Peter Berezin, chief global strategist at BCA Research, noting that by education level, participation rates remain the most depressed among those with a high-school diploma but no college. "Unskilled workers have been much more reluctant to enter the labor force than you would have expected, given that wage gains for unskilled or less-skilled positions have been stronger than for everyone else."

It could have something to do with how Covid-19 has changed the nature of work and affected mental health, said Brian Bethune, an economist at Boston College.

"A lot of jobs have become a lot more difficult—from teaching to working on airline crews with packed airplanes and irate passengers," he said. "So people have just said, 'Enough's enough.'"

That dynamic could be self-reinforcing. Labor shortages—particularly in industries that require a lot of interaction—make the work itself more risky and unpleasant, which in turn makes people reluctant to return to these jobs.

"While wages have risen, maybe they haven't risen enough to compensate for the fact that when everyone's short-staffed, it means you have to do extra work," said Mr. Berezin. "Employers may have to raise wages significantly in [inflation-adjusted] terms, which would make the Fed's life more difficult."

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HEADLINE	08/13 Consumers still spending on fun
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/consumers-are-still-spending-on-fun-11660397194?mod=hp_list_pos3
GIST	<p>Americans are splurging on summer travel and entertainment, putting their money toward experiences outside of the homes where they spent the early years of the pandemic.</p> <p>This week a range of businesses that cater to leisure time reported strong results. Hotel chains said tourists are shelling out top dollar for rooms, and cruise lines posted records in onboard spending. Theme parks said sales per visitor hit historic highs and casinos reported rising slot-machine gambling in Las Vegas.</p> <p>Pent-up demand and newfound wanderlust after being stuck at home during the pandemic is fueling big spending on vacations, said Marriott International Inc. finance chief Leeny Oberg last week. "We are not seeing any signs of any demand pullback at this point," she said. "People want to get out there and travel."</p> <p>This week also brought new evidence that consumer sentiment might be improving. On Friday, the University of Michigan reported that its consumer-sentiment index, which surveys consumer attitudes on</p>

the state of the economy, rose 3.6 index points to 55.1 from a July reading of 51.5. Consumer sentiment has increased since dropping to 50 in June—the lowest reading on records dating back to 1952.

The Labor Department reported Wednesday that [prices for gasoline, air travel and hotels](#) eased in July, boosting vacation budgets.

Many people are taking vacations that they have put off since the start of the pandemic. According to the Labor Department, 6.2 million workers [took vacation or personal days](#) during the week of the Census Bureau's July household survey this year, up 7% from the year prior.

Lodging companies reported strong revenue figures for the recently ended quarter, as governments worldwide removed some [of the remaining Covid-19 travel restrictions](#) and people flocked to domestic and international cities and resorts. Executives said guests are willing to spend more than ever before on hotel rooms, even as they feel the sting of inflation across other household expenses.

“We’re seeing pricing on luxury and lifestyle we’ve never seen before as an industry,” said Keith Barr, chief executive of [InterContinental Hotels Group](#) PLC. He added that consumers might be cutting spending elsewhere to afford their long-awaited summer vacations.

“They may decide not to buy a new television, but they are going to take their kids on holiday for the summer,” he said.

Axel Hefer, CEO of travel-booking platform [Trivago](#) NV, said Americans are indulging in big trips this summer.

“You’ve been telling your kids for two years that you’ll take them to [Disneyland](#); at some time you need to actually take them to Disneyland,” he said.

Next summer could be different. Mr. Hefer said he expects Americans to be more frugal with their summer 2023 travel planning.

Allison Mertzman and her family of four hadn’t had a big trip since January 2019. The Los Angeles-based travel agent said she put aside money every month for a year to take her family to Florida this summer, where they visited Legoland, Peppa Pig Theme Park and Walt Disney World, and went on a Disney-themed cruise.

She estimates the trip cost \$10,000, which they used to mark a wedding anniversary, birthdays and other milestones. But it might be a few years before they are able to do something similar.

“We’re probably planning for one for three years from now just due to schedules,” she said. “Also, it’s a huge expense.”

The cost-saving potential of vacation rentals has boosted their popularity in recent months, according to Vacasa, a vacation-rental management service provider. The company said this category of accommodation is well-positioned to weather demand or inflation challenges because vacation rentals can cost less than hotels. Chief Financial Officer Jamie Cohen said guests share rentals with friends or make dinner at their vacation home instead of dining out to save money.

The CEOs of [Hilton Worldwide Holdings](#) Inc. and [Hyatt Hotels](#) Corp. said the return of business travel and group trips will drive demand for rooms even higher, while leisure travel levels could remain high for years.

“This is not something that’s a flash in the pan,” Hyatt CEO Mark Hoplamazian said. “Our customer base is rock solid.”

James Risoleo, CEO of [Host Hotels & Resorts](#) Inc., said the company is still seeing strong demand from leisure travelers extending into the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, driven by demand for its resorts in the Sunbelt and Maui.

“That stat in and of itself gives us comfort that there’s not going to be the pullback in consumer spending at our resort properties that some folks have talked about,” he said.

Walt Disney Co. said its recent quarter was the best ever for sales in its parks, experiences and products division, which includes Disneyland, Walt Disney World and four resorts in Europe and Asia. “Demand has not abated” at the parks, Disney Chief Financial Officer Christine McCarthy said.

While attendance for the summer quarter failed to top prepandemic levels, [SeaWorld Entertainment](#) Inc. and [Cedar Fair](#) LP said spending per guest hit all-time highs.

[Six Flags Entertainment](#) Corp. said [attendance fell 22% from a year ago](#). However, the visitors who came spent more, with per-capita spending up more than 50% from prepandemic levels, the company said.

“They’re choosing the brisket rather than the burger,” Cedar Fair CEO Richard Zimmerman said.

[Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings](#) Ltd. similarly saw its “highest ever onboard revenue generation,” according to CEO Frank Del Rio. Still, the company also posted a wider-than-expected loss, as well as disappointing overall revenue, and said it expects to post another loss in the current quarter.

Casinos and resorts in Las Vegas have been bustling this summer as both leisure and business travelers return to slot machines. [Wynn Resorts](#) Ltd. said slot handle, the industry term for the amount wagered, in its recent quarter rose 63% above 2019 levels.

[Caesars Entertainment](#) Inc. saw [97% occupancy in Las Vegas](#) last quarter, and forward bookings show continued demand on the horizon. People over the age of 55 are returning to Vegas at levels not seen since before the pandemic, and there is a noticeable uptick in international travelers, says CEO Thomas Reeg. “There are not strong enough words to convey how well it’s going in Vegas for us,” he said.

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HEADLINE	08/14 Day 172 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/14/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-172-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine says it will target Russian soldiers who shoot at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant or use it as a base to shoot from, as both sides again accused the other of shelling the facility. President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Saturday that Russian soldiers who shot at the plant or used it as cover would become a “special target”, Reuters reported. He repeated accusations that Moscow was using the plant – Europe’s largest – as nuclear blackmail. The exiled mayor of the town where the plant is located in south-eastern Ukraine said it had come under fresh shelling.• An explosion was heard in the north-eastern part of Melitopol, the mayor of the city, Ivan Fedorov, Melitopol, posted on Telegram. “We’re waiting for good news about Russian losses,” he added. The city, which is east of the Dnipro river and north-east of the Crimean peninsula, has been occupied since March.• The two primary road bridges giving access to the pocket of Russian-occupied territory on the west bank of the Dnipro in Ukraine’s Kherson region are now probably out of use for the purposes of substantial Russian military resupply, British military intelligence said on Saturday, which the UK’s defence ministry has described as a key vulnerability.• The number of fatalities after a Russian missile strike on Kramatorsk, in Ukraine’s Donetsk region, has grown to three, the Kyiv Post reports. It cites a report by Ukrinform giving the Kramatorsk mayor, Oleksandr Honcharenko, as the source.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US has said it is concerned by reports of British, Swedish and Croatian nationals being charged by “illegitimate authorities” in eastern Ukraine. “Russia and its proxies have an obligation to respect international humanitarian law, including the right and protections afforded to prisoners of war,” the secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said. • Russia has warned the US that potentially placing Russia on the US State Department’s list of state sponsors of terrorism could be a diplomatic “point of no return”, and trigger a total breakdown of relations between the two countries. • The Ukrainian military has reportedly shot down a Russian fighter jet, as well as four Russian drones, over the past day, according to Ukrainian media. • Two Russian missiles hit Kharkiv overnight on Saturday, the region’s governor, Oleh Synehubov, said on national television. He said there were no casualties but one missile damaged a technical college while the other landed in a residential area, Reuters reported. • Ukrainian presidential adviser Mykhailo Podolyak said on Saturday the war could only end with the return of the Crimea peninsula and the punishment of the Russian leaders who ordered the military invasion. • Russian forces have taken full control of Pisky, a village on the outskirts in Ukraine’s Donetsk region, Interfax cited the Russian defence ministry as saying on Saturday. Ukraine’s military command said later that “fierce fighting” continued in the village. • Ukraine’s health minister has accused Russian authorities of committing a crime against humanity by blocking access to affordable medicines and hospitals in occupied areas. • The Estonian prime minister, Kaja Kallas, has again complained that the lack of comprehensive Schengen zone travel restrictions for Russians puts an “unfair” burden on countries neighbouring Russia, reiterating calls on the European Union to introduce visa bans for Russian nationals.
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HEADLINE	08/14 Residents flee Ukraine nuclear plant area
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/14/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#artillery-fire-resumes-from-the-zaporizhzhia-nuclear-plant-as-more-civilians-flee-the-area
GIST	<p>ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine — Artillery fire resumed on Sunday from the direction of a nuclear power plant in southern Ukraine, with shells streaking into a town from which the Ukrainian army has been unable to return fire, for fear of causing a meltdown or releasing radiation at the plant.</p> <p>Hours before the barrages, there were reports that conditions were unraveling in and near the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The flight of civilians from the area accelerated on Saturday.</p> <p>The plant is the first active nuclear power plant in a combat zone. The United States and European Union have called for the formation of a demilitarized zone, as the fighting in and around the plant and its active reactors and stored nuclear waste has sparked particular worry.</p> <p>Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said in his nightly address on Saturday that Russia had resorted to “nuclear blackmail” at the plant, reiterating a Ukrainian analysis that Moscow was using it to slow a Ukrainian counteroffensive toward the Russian-occupied city of Kherson, where Russian conventional military defenses appear increasingly wobbly.</p> <p>Contrary to the fears of some analysts when Moscow launched its invasion in February, the more urgent nuclear threat in the Ukraine war now appears to be Russia damaging the civilian plant, rather than deploying its own nuclear weapons. Russia says it’s Ukrainian forces who are shelling the plant.</p> <p>Engineers say that yard-thick reinforced concrete containment structures protect the reactors from even direct hits. International concern, however, has grown that shelling could spark a fire or cause other damage that would lead to a nuclear accident.</p> <p>The six pressurized water reactors at the complex retain most sources of radiation, reducing risks. After pressurized water reactors failed at the Fukushima nuclear plant in Japan in 2011, Ukraine upgraded the</p>

Zaporizhzhia site to enable a shutdown even after the loss of cooling water from outside the containment structures, Dmytro Gortenko, a former plant engineer, said in an interview.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency said that on Saturday, Russian artillery fire hit a pump, damaged a fire station and sparked fires near the plant that could not be immediately extinguished because of the damage to the fire station.

In fields near the Russian-controlled town of Enerhodar, close to the plant, long lines of cars carrying fleeing civilians formed on Saturday, according to social media posts and another former engineer at the plant who has remained in touch with local residents.

"Locals are abandoning the town," said the former engineer, who asked to be identified by only his first name, Oleksiy, because of security concerns. Residents had been leaving for weeks, but the pace picked up after Saturday's barrages and fires, he said.

Since Russia captured the plant in March, its army has controlled the facility, while Ukrainian engineers have continued to operate it.

Ukrainian employees are not fleeing but sending their families away, said Oleksiy, who left in June. Enerhodar was built for plant employees in the Soviet period and had a prewar population of about 50,000.

Ukraine has accused Russia of staging artillery attacks targeting Ukrainian towns across the Dnipro River from the plant starting in July, as Ukraine's counteroffensive in the south ramped up.

Overnight into Sunday morning, Russian howitzers fired on the Ukrainian town of Nikopol, which lies across a reservoir from the power plant, Yevheny Yetushenko, the Ukrainian military governor of the town, said in a post on Telegram.

The Ukrainian military has said it has few options for firing back. In July, it used a self-destructing drone to strike a Russian rocket artillery launcher that sat about 150 yards from one of the plant's reactors.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Pandemic: schools rethink summer school
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/education-lab/as-pandemic-learning-gaps-loom-schools-rethink-summer-school-to-keep-kids-engaged/
GIST	<p>BOTHELL — What do kazoos, homemade bubble wands and race cars made of recycled material have to do with getting kids to read in the summer? A lot, if you're at Canyon Creek Elementary.</p> <p>That's because while the students here spend the first part of their day on literacy, the other half is spent doing activities rooted in science, technology and engineering.</p> <p>It's part of an effort to keep kids excited about and engaged in school after learning slowed during the pandemic. Summer school attendance isn't mandatory — students are invited to enroll based on recommendations from teachers and assessment data — so fun STEM lessons act as an incentive for them to keep them coming back, said Amity Butler, assistant superintendent at Northshore School District.</p> <p>"What we found is that last year ... it became tough to try to always make everything fit into literacy," she said. "And if literacy is hard for you and that's our focus and you're constantly having to focus on sounding words out or doing things that are always difficult for you, you might not want to come back every single day."</p> <p>Amid boxes of books and binders of curriculum materials stacked in the hallways, the energy was palpable during the final week of the Northshore summer reading and STEM program, as staff prepared dozens of soon-to-be fourth and fifth graders — and the building they learn in — for the upcoming school year.</p>

Students spent the first part of the day reading, working in groups on letter sounds and talking about key ideas from whatever book they're reading. Then, after recess and snacks, they got to do activities in which they can embrace their inner scientist or engineer.

Students in Heather Casper's classroom were engineers one day as they built makeshift race cars using CDs, cardboard boxes, straws and tape. The young engineers were laser-focused on ensuring their cars — with names like Thunderskull, Cheesy Goldfish and Pointing Jupiter — would go the farthest and fastest down an improvised ramp.

Students in other classrooms in this hallway learned about the amplification of sound — using kazoes, much to the dismay of neighboring teachers — while others created bubble wands or wind-powered cars.

Casper and the other teachers wish school could look like this all year.

Some lessons are easy enough to replicate, but the curriculum and materials cost money, and during the school year class sizes are almost twice as big. For summer school, teachers were paired with a paraeducator, and each class had, at most, around a dozen students at a time. The Northshore program enrolled about 95 kids this year in person, and another 40 or so in a remote reading program.

For elementary kids, the pandemic has delayed a “normal” transition into the social and academic structures of school. These students were in first or second grade when coronavirus hit, and the learning they've done over the past three school years has varied widely.

Butler said last year it was difficult for many young learners to make regular progress in reading, especially with so many students and staff repeatedly out for COVID-19 exposures, along with substitute shortages. Masks added an obstacle because they covered teachers' mouths as they sounded out words.

“I can't emphasize how hard that is for little people who may not be verbalizing letter sounds correctly — those are all just huge components to reading instruction,” she said.

Teachers were also busy doing COVID testing, adapting to virtual learning needs, and changing the way they interacted with students in their classrooms to maintain social distancing rules.

“It really has been a lot ... I feel like I had to relearn my entire career I was trained in,” Casper said.

The summer program lasted just four weeks, not enough time to make up for the learning they have lost. Also, students are at the summer program — referred to by Casper as “camp” — for only a few hours each day, four days each week. To make the most of the time, they are grouped according to ability. The small classes allowed educators to give kids the individualized attention they need, Casper said.

Other summer elementary programs in the region have been even shorter and included fewer students — staffing is an ongoing challenge, and teachers and kids need some time off.

Kent Elementary School's summer program enrolled about 25 kids, filling half of the available spots. It lasted for just two weeks, but principal Rosa Villarreal said kids could learn something new even in one day, especially when teachers are able to focus on their specific needs.

“When you have a very individualized plan for every student, they come to you and you have this chart ... of exactly what they need, so I'm going to work on exactly what they need and I'm going to see progress,” she said.

Catherine Augustine, senior policy researcher at [RAND](#), who worked on [a study of voluntary summer school](#) programs, agrees that having a focused curriculum is part of what makes an impact on students. But, she said, research shows the academic effects of summer programs are limited, and require high-quality teachers and curricula and consistent attendance over time.

“Summer programs — if done well — basically, kids learn the same amount that they would learn in the school year for the time period given,” she said. “So if you have a five-week summer program and it’s done well, kids are going to learn five weeks’ worth.”

Still, Augustine said it can be a useful tool to help make up for slowed academic progress during the pandemic. Augustine points out there are many other impacts, like the availability of meals and physical activity for kids who might otherwise be at home. She said more schools are offering blended programs, where kids do things like rock climbing, water polo or putting on a play, providing opportunities for students who might not be able to attend expensive summer camps; it’s not just sitting in a hot classroom.

Many schools, she said, are also building aspects of social-emotional learning into summer school, which can improve kids’ ability to regulate their emotions and encourage them to keep showing up.

“One of the things that we learned in our study is that if the type of program is a warm and welcoming place ... they feel like they belong there, they feel like people want them there, they’re more likely to attend,” she said.

Local educators and school leaders say that’s a big focus for them, especially this year. In Lake Washington schools, social-emotional learning has been a core aspect of summer school, said Kelly Pease, director of intervention programs and literacy.

“It’s been really important to have our teachers start and end the day with social-emotional learning,” she said. “We want this summer-school teacher to be their person that they know believes in them and knows that they can do it — that they can gain the skills they need to become readers.”

Back at Canyon Creek, Casper started her afternoon STEM lesson with a feelings check — asking kids to rate how they’re doing on a one-through-five scale using their fingers. Part of ensuring kids are engaged and learning is making sure they feel safe, she said.

“Classroom community and social-emotional learning is like the number-one thing I promote in my classroom ... last year there was a lot of anxiety to start the year,” she said.

Casper said she hopes to build more connections with families to ease their anxiety too. In Northshore, as in many other districts, some families elected to send their kids to school remotely, and those students will be returning to buildings for the first time this fall since the pandemic began.

She also plans to implement some of the summer-school STEM activities in her classes to help foster connections and teamwork skills. With the new school year right around the corner, and with masks off and students sitting in groups again, Casper said she’s feeling more optimistic every day.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Sprouts of hope in downtown Seattle wilting
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/there-are-sprouts-of-hope-in-downtown-seattle-but-they-are-wilting/
GIST	<p>At the time that I floated the idea of an Amazon Go store, of all things, being a symbol of Seattle’s rebirth, I was admittedly grasping.</p> <p>But when the tiny store opened during the bleak close of 2020, right next to a crime hot spot corner, it was the first new storefront in boarded-up downtown since the coronavirus had descended 10 months earlier.</p> <p>Things were so tenuous then that even an automated, cashless, barely staffed convenience store qualified as a sprout of hope: “It was a bit like a flower — OK a really rich flower — had peeked up through some rubble,” I wrote.</p> <p>Well now the store really is becoming a parable. Because this flower has already wilted.</p>

Amazon has closed the store near Fourth Avenue and Pike Street, “for the safety of our store employees, customers, and third-party vendors.” The statement said the company is “hopeful conditions in the area will improve in the future.”

So far, they have not. When the store opened in December 2020, that area of downtown was mostly deserted. It didn’t feel unsafe so much as unreal, like an empty movie set.

It’s crowded now. Partly with shoppers and some tourists. But also with a persistent open-air drug market that on one day this past week had so jammed the sidewalks on Pike Street that pedestrians had to walk out into the bus lane to pass.

Thursday, a typical day based on police reports and aid calls, there was one “drug-related casualty” down the block and a dozen other calls for either narcotics or “behavioral/emotional crisis.”

That same day, while I was there, a man collapsed face-first on the sidewalk around the corner from the now-shuttered Amazon Go. When I asked his mates if they needed me to call 911, they daubed the back of his neck with a wet T-shirt and said, “No, no, he’ll pop out of it.”

He did. Later, though, I saw him shouting and bashing a wooden pole against a Pike Street building front.

Police have been trying to crack down. One day a week ago they busted eight people here for selling fentanyl and meth. The futility was acknowledged right [in the news release](#): The cops said they ran down a 16-year-old who was selling fentanyl and had a gun, only to realize they’d just arrested the same teenager, pushing fentanyl with a different gun, at the same Third and Pike corner a few weeks earlier.

Police data shows what Amazon Go was up against. The store sits in the city’s smallest police beat, a roughly four-block-by-six-block area downtown known as “Mary Three,” or [M3, in police lexicon](#). It’s basically [Pine to Seneca and Second Avenue to Eighth](#). In the past month this small zone saw 16 assaults, 12 burglaries, 10 robberies, 23 drug busts, 14 weapons violations and 12 property destructions, to name some of the 141 total crimes reported.

That’s up from about 100 crimes per month last summer in M3. It isn’t clear whether there’s more crime now, or just more reporting of it due to more enforcement. Regardless, the businesses there are being pushed over the limit. The spa next door to Amazon Go is closed, the Chase Bank branch on the next block is closed, and [Starbucks made news](#) when it closed its nearby cafe at Westlake last month.

A block west of the Amazon Go, poor Wild Ginger restaurant remains open, though it looks like a bomb went off. Five of its giant plate glass windows are boarded over after being smashed — including one last week when a man threw a large rock while customers dined inside.

“This is going to put us out of business,” the owner [told KING 5](#).

Downtown can best be described as being in a liminal state. It’s not all bad: It’s surprisingly packed, at least during the day. But the drug scene is dystopian and omnipresent. People wander the streets clutching foil and pipes used to smoke the “blues.” It’s a plague that’s starting to rival the coronavirus for escalating deaths: This year so far, 314 have died countywide just from fentanyl overdoses, a pace 49% higher than last year. Which saw twice as many fentanyl deaths as the year before that.

What can be done? At City Hall this past week they tentatively endorsed a plan to hire more police. One council member, Teresa Mosqueda, voted no and said the police hiring efforts were a sideshow.

“The officers themselves have told human service providers there’s no money that can compensate for them having nowhere to bring people,” she said.

	<p>She is wrong and also right, it seems to me. Seattle obviously needs more cops — for the rising violent crime and shootings alone. It’s also plain to see that cops can’t solve it alone. What is a police officer supposed to do with someone like the man I described above who was out cold on the sidewalk?</p> <p>Mosqueda is right that we need detox beds, drug counselors and social workers, too. What I don’t get is why cops are still being pitted against aid workers, as if it’s one or the other.</p> <p>“Wouldn’t it be better to have cops and mental health professionals go together?” was how the president of the state crisis responder’s association put it to The Seattle Times recently.</p> <p>Spend a few hours in Mary Three and it’s as plain as plywood that it’s a crisis zone. It desperately needs more of everything — of police officers, social workers, counselors, paramedics. People are dying on the sidewalks as politicians dither, we pass by and the businesses leave.</p> <p>If money’s the issue, divert it from the burgeoning Jumpstart payroll tech tax revenues, and flood the zone. There was a hope, which first sprouted with that Amazon Go store, that downtown’s problems would ease as the pandemic did. I know, it’s just an automated, cashless convenience store, one among many run by a soulless megacorp.</p> <p>But it’d be a mistake to dismiss its symbolism for that reason. Because it’s the hope that’s wilting.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Colleges warn students on monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2022/08/13/colleges-monkeypox-preparations/
GIST	<p>One by one, cases of the painful viral infection popped up this summer at George Washington, Georgetown and American universities. Now these schools in the nation’s capital and others across the country are warning their communities to be on guard against the potential spread of monkeypox in the coming weeks when students return to campus for the fall term.</p> <p>The public health campaigns centered on monkeypox come as colleges and universities are managing the third back-to-school season shadowed by the coronavirus pandemic. Students and educators are eager for normalcy after the disruptions of the previous two years.</p> <p>That could complicate efforts to combat a threat much different from covid-19. Health authorities say monkeypox spreads through intimate contact, often skin to skin, including but not limited to sexual encounters. Authorities also warn of possible spread through respiratory secretions or touching the bedding or towels used by someone who is infected.</p> <p>All of which sounds like circumstances that could occur in college dormitories, on dance floors or in other campus spaces.</p> <p>“Now we have to manage two public health emergencies all at once,” said Ranit Mishori, vice president and chief public health officer at Georgetown. “It’s very difficult for staff, students and faculty.”</p> <p>Mishori said Georgetown officials know of two recent cases within their community. GWU and AU officials also have confirmed cases. The news site Inside Higher Ed reported this month that cases have emerged as well at the University of Texas at Austin, and West Chester and Bucknell universities, both in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>Gregory L. Fenves, president of Emory University, said the campus in Atlanta is preparing for the new health threat and mindful that the coronavirus pandemic has not disappeared. “People are tired of covid,” he said. “This issue of public health fatigue is a real one.”</p> <p>One of the most sensitive issues colleges face is how to communicate about an outbreak that so far in the United States has spread mainly among men who have sex with other men. “We don’t want to stigmatize</p>

sexual behavior,” said Lynn R. Goldman, dean of public health at GWU. She noted that monkeypox is not a sexually transmitted disease, and condoms don’t guard against it.

The American College Health Association said in a statement: “Anyone can get monkeypox, so campuses should communicate it as a public health concern for all; however, campus communications can be tailored to different audiences to be most effective. No matter the audience, it is important that communications convey compassion, reduce stigma and address equity.”

Mishori said schools should brief athletes, coaches, custodians and others about the virus. “We recognize that anybody and everybody is at risk, regardless of gender or sexual orientation,” she said.

In recent days, universities have cautioned communities about how the virus spreads, the signs of infection — painful rashes that appear like pimples or blisters, then scabs — and the degree of the threat it poses.

“Currently, the risk of monkeypox transmission on campus is very low and with proper safety precautions, there is no need for elevated concern,” David S. Reitman, the medical director of the AU student health center, wrote in an Aug. 8 message to the community. “Monkeypox is less contagious and less likely to result in severe illness or death than COVID-19.” The possibility of infection in classroom settings and normal daily activities is low, Reitman wrote.

Spyridon S. Marinopoulos, chief medical officer of the University of Maryland, urged people on campus on Aug. 9 to take “everyday precautions” to protect themselves, such as regular handwashing and avoiding “close, skin-to-skin contact with people who have a rash that looks like monkeypox.”

Mass vaccination, a solution many [universities embraced](#) to protect against the coronavirus, is not yet under consideration with monkeypox. Supplies of the monkeypox vaccine are limited, and health authorities are giving priority to high-risk individuals.

Campus health centers will be alert to what monkeypox rashes look like, officials say, and will arrange for viral testing if students need it. The turnaround time to get results could be up to five days, Mishori said, and students with suspected cases would be required to isolate until learning whether they are infected.

Those with confirmed infections would be required to isolate further, Mishori said, possibly two weeks or longer. Depending on the configuration of dorm beds and rooms, that could mean an infected student would move temporarily into a hotel room on Georgetown’s campus.

Those are among the unwelcome scenarios that colleges and universities everywhere are gaming out as the fall term approaches.

“We’re all kind of on-deck right now in terms of thinking ahead — what are we going to do if?” said Goldman of GWU. “What if, what if, what if?”

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HEADLINE	08/13 Tensions flare between Israel, Hezbollah
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/13/israel-lebanon-border-threat/
GIST	<p>DOVEV, Israel — From this sunbaked ridge, the small outpost is clearly visible: a trailer that appeared one morning in April, quickly followed by a two-story observation tower, just feet from the hotly contested “Blue Line” that separates Lebanon and Israel.</p> <p>Lebanon says the structures are used by an environmental group. But Israeli officials say the tower belongs to Hezbollah, the Iranian-backed Lebanese militia group, and is one of 22 outposts that have appeared along the U.N.-monitored Blue Line in the past three months — part of a sudden and worrying escalation that has led Israel to put its northern forces on high alert.</p>

“This is a major change in what we’ve seen in the last few years,” said a senior Israeli military official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss security issues. “Hezbollah is becoming very, very blatant.”

The group’s activities — which officials say include a doubling of the number and size of patrols near the border, a series of drone incursions and a drumbeat of threats from Hezbollah leaders — come as American mediators race to settle a dispute between the two countries over suddenly lucrative natural gas fields in the Mediterranean Sea.

Israel is already developing one drilling site, the Karish Field, in what Lebanon claims are disputed territorial waters. After two years of talks, time is running out to reach a settlement by September, when Israel is expected to begin extracting gas from the first rig.

Negotiators have indicated that a deal may be close, after recent visits to both Lebanon and Israel by Amos Hochstein, the U.S. senior adviser for energy security. But the stakes are rising.

Hezbollah has threatened to attack Israel if an acceptable deal isn’t reached and has dispatched drones toward the gas field at least twice in recent weeks, including three unmanned aircraft that were shot down by Israel in early July.

The drones appeared to be unarmed and caused no damage. But they hinted at Hezbollah’s ability to strike the offshore facility at a time when Lebanon’s economy is cratering.

“We will reach Karish and everything beyond Karish and everything beyond that,” Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah said in a televised speech. “War is much more honorable than the situation Lebanon is heading to now — collapse and starvation.”

This month the head of Israel’s military advised the security cabinet that the situation was at risk of turning into a military escalation with Hezbollah, according to Israeli media reports. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reportedly warned Hezbollah through intermediaries that any attack will provoke fierce retaliation.

“If the deal is not accepted by Lebanon or Israel, we are heading into a confrontation,” said Jacques Neria, who was an adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the 1990s and is now with the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. “Any war that starts on the maritime battlefield will spill out onto other arenas. If they hit our rigs, we’ll hit them on land.”

The spike in tensions comes as Israel nervously eyes international efforts to restore an agreement with Iran over its nuclear program. Israel says a new deal, which would presumably ease financial sanctions against Iran, risks further empowering Tehran and its proxies, including Hezbollah and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, with which the IDF fought a three-day battle this month that killed 45 people in Gaza.

After a breakthrough in talks in Vienna this week, negotiators have returned to their capitals to consider what Europe called its “final” proposal to save the nuclear deal. Washington, over Israel’s objections, expressed its support for the text, but Tehran has sought to temper expectations.

For the Israelis and Lebanese living along this hilly border, sometimes within meters of one another, the risk of war is ever-present. In many Israeli communities, it is easy to hear the call to prayer from Lebanese mosques and the firecrackers from Lebanese birthday celebrations.

“They are our neighbors. Right there, those are Lebanese cars,” said Silka Schreiber, pointing at vehicles traversing the valley a half-mile from the grocery store in Metula, an Israeli town of fewer than 2,000 bound on two sides by the Blue Line fence.

But the proximity doesn’t make the current flare-up seem less dangerous to those living in the line of fire. A 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah lasted for 34 days, killing more than 1,000 people in Lebanon

and dozens of Israelis. Osnat Ben Nun, 55, was pregnant during the tense run-up to the conflict and remembers antiaircraft explosions like fireworks in the night sky. Now, her child is an Israeli soldier.

“My son is in the army,” said Ben Nun, a social worker. “It feels different. I’m very scared.”

The Israeli military contends that Hezbollah is building its presence along the Blue Line in violation of international agreements. An opening in the white trailer, which is about the size of a shipping container, and windows in the tower peer directly into Israel.

Israel has asked the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the body responsible for monitoring the border, to intervene, but it claims its hands are tied.

A spokesman for UNIFIL said that it was aware of the 22 posts that have recently appeared, but that it was unable to visit because the Lebanese government has declared them private property. Nor had it detected any activities at the sites prohibited by the cease-fire agreements between the two countries.

“UNIFIL has not observed any unauthorized armed persons at the locations or found any basis to report a violation of [cease-fire agreements],” said spokesman Andrea Tenenti. “On our part, UNIFIL remains vigilant and continues to closely monitor all these sites and the Blue Line.”

Israeli observers say they have watched men in the outpost taking photos of its equipment and personnel. The banner of an environmental group flies over the structures, “Green Without Borders,” which Israel contends is a front organization.

“They may not hold up cards saying ‘We are Hezbollah,’ but these are not birdwatchers,” said the senior official.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Baghdad gripped by rival protests
SOURCE	https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2022/08/12/iraq-protests-election-sadr/
GIST	<p>BAGHDAD — Rival protesters took to Iraq’s streets Friday as their leaders vied for political dominance, just 10 months after a U.S.-backed election that was meant to heal the country’s fractures left many more exposed.</p> <p>Are you on Telegram? Subscribe to our channel for the latest updates on Russia's war in Ukraine. The aftermath of those polls has forced years-long tensions to the surface. In a country where elites rule by consensus, rival Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni politicians have been unable to agree on key government appointments. The election’s biggest winner, powerful Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, has withdrawn his parliamentarians from the process, sending his supporters instead to occupy the leafy grounds of the legislature.</p> <p>He is now calling for early elections, which would be the second in less than a year.</p> <p>As dusk approached Friday, Sadr’s supporters gathered in provinces across the country and outside the parliament to echo his demands. But they were not alone. Several miles away, near Baghdad’s heavily fortified Green Zone, thousands of foot soldiers for the cleric’s rivals — former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki and leaders of armed groups linked to Iran — gathered too, protesting what they described as a “political coup” by Sadr.</p> <p>By nightfall, a crowd of hundreds was building tents in the capital, and people said they were setting up for the long haul.</p> <p>“We’ll stay as long as it takes,” said Ali Hassan, a 30-year-old government employee from Baghdad. “The people know our demands, and they know that they are legitimate.”</p>

While the politics were complicated, the core problem was simple, analysts said. Twenty years after the U.S.-led invasion, winners from the kleptocratic political system it ultimately installed are now fighting over who reaps its spoils.

Locked out of that system are millions of ordinary Iraqis who have seen little benefit from the nation's immense oil wealth. Hospitals are crumbling, and the education system is among the worst in the region. For three days last week, as a heat wave pushed temperatures past 125 degrees, three southern provinces failed to even keep the lights on, as the extreme heat pushed an already shaky power grid to the breaking point.

Iraq's last elections took place several months early, as a response to mass protests that demanded the overthrow of the political system. The young and mostly Shiite demonstrators were met with brutal repression, and Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi was forced to step down after almost 600 people were killed.

In October, fresh polls left Sadr with the largest bloc in parliament, and Maliki with the second, as historically low voter turnout left powerful parties with large bases as the biggest winners. Many Iraqis viewed the polls as an exercise in reshuffling the political deck chairs, and said that none of the major factions represented them.

But the atmosphere was festive outside Baghdad's parliament on Friday as men in black T-shirts streamed through the streets carrying photographs of Sadr and his father, a revered cleric killed by dictator Saddam Hussein's regime, to demand more elections, and the sidelining of all the "old faces" — apart from Sadr.

A tinny loudspeaker blasted music through the air as bands of protesters sang and swayed, others enjoyed free kebabs or large chunks of melon. "We're here to dissolve the parliament and to stand with Sayeed Moqtada's demands," said Hassan al-Iraqi, a religious studies student in his 30s who said that he had made the five-hour journey from the northern city of Mosul.

Sadr derives his strength in part from millions of impoverished supporters who view him as a sacred figure of storied lineage, and as someone who has resisted occupation and injustice. For weeks, he has used his Twitter account to praise his supporters' efforts on the streets, likening their efforts to a "revolution."

The messages have been received with a mix of excitement and reverence, as bands of teenagers pass around cellphones to read his posts.

By nightfall Friday, politicians from the opposing bloc were tweeting statements in praise of their own supporters too.

Maliki called the rallies "massive" and peaceful.

"Today you have brought joy to the hearts of Iraqis," wrote Qais al-Khazali, a Shiite cleric aligned with Maliki. "The martyr Muhandis is all happy when he sees his sons defending Iraq and the interest of the people and the state with courage and awareness," he wrote, in reference to a powerful militia leader killed alongside Iranian general Qasem Soleimani in a January 2020 drone strike ordered by President Donald Trump.

Experts point to that drone strike as a seminal moment in Iraq's latest unraveling — both of the slain men were pivotal figures in maintaining unity among the country's now divided Shiite factions.

In Baghdad's city center, another group also gathered Friday as the heat ebbed and traffic snarled the streets. They were secular activists, and they had planned their own protest in a place etched in the annals of the American invasion: Firdos Square, where U.S. troops once pulled down a statue of Saddam Hussein.

	“This whole system was built on a mistake,” said Najad al-Iraqi, an activist, who said he had not voted in a single election since Saddam’s fall. “None of these parties have ever worked for us,” he said. “They’re all corrupt, every one of them.”
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HEADLINE	08/13 China sets joint air force training Thailand
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/china-sets-joint-air-force-training-with-thailand-11660413180?mod=lead feature below a pos1
GIST	<p>China’s military said it would dispatch jet fighters to Thailand for joint air-force training with the U.S. ally starting Sunday, drills that come on the heels of Beijing’s live-fire exercises around Taiwan and coincide with a large U.S. military exercise in Indonesia.</p> <p>The coming Falcon Strike exercises will mark the fifth time the Thai and Chinese air forces have practiced and are focused on building trust between the nations, China’s Ministry of National Defense said.</p> <p>In recent days, the U.S. has conducted its own live-fire drills in Indonesia along with regional allies including Australia, Japan and Singapore.</p> <p>The so-called Super Garuda Shield exercises have gathered 2,000 forces from each the U.S. and Indonesia, plus personnel from 12 other nations, some participating for the first time. A joint U.S.-Indonesia government statement described the exercises as “significantly larger in scope and scale than previous exercises” and “designed to strengthen interoperability, capabilities, trust, and cooperation built over decades of shared experiences.”</p> <p>High-profile war-games in Southeast Asia featuring the two global rivals are a stark reminder of how military tensions increasingly cloud a region known primarily for its economic dynamism. The U.S. military footprint is extensive in Southeast Asia, but China’s rising clout and expanding ambitions increasingly make it—on a limited scale—a challenger to traditional American dominance.</p> <p>In addition to demonstrating their military capabilities, Washington and Beijing in recent weeks have dispatched top diplomats to Southeast Asian capitals, including to a regional grouping in Cambodia where both sides described the other as a destabilizing force. The U.S. and Chinese presidents, Joe Biden and Xi Jinping, are expected in the region in November for back-to-back summits in Thailand and Indonesia, where The Wall Street Journal reported this week efforts are being made to schedule bilateral talks.</p> <p>The U.S. Defense Department says China’s primary military objectives center on gaining control of the self-governed island of Taiwan—and tension ratcheted up significantly this month.</p> <p>The People’s Liberation Army this week concluded several days of live-fire exercises, naval and air patrols plus missile strikes around Taiwan aimed at deterring pro-independence moves on the island, which it fears will be stoked by a recent visit by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The island is self-governed by a democratically elected government but China claims Taiwan as its territory, and the PLA’s exercises simulated how Beijing might execute a blockade or invasion to gain control.</p> <p>Russian President Vladimir Putin’s strike into neighboring Ukraine this year stirred concerns Chinese President Xi could take a similar step to realize his Taiwan ambitions, though military analysts primarily cast doubt such a move is imminent considering victory by Beijing would be difficult. U.S. authorities described China’s drills, which disrupted commercial shipping and raised military tensions, as an overreaction that risks destabilizing the region.</p> <p>The Thai-Chinese Falcon Strike exercises scheduled to begin Sunday will be hosted at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base, which has longstanding ties to the U.S. Air Force and was used extensively during the Vietnam War. The first Falcon Strike exercises, in November 2015, appeared as significant evidence of China’s rising sway and followed by more than a year the toppling of Thailand’s elected government in an Army-led coup.</p>

	<p>China's Defense Ministry said this year's exercises will feature "key training courses such as air support, strikes on ground targets, and small- and large-scale troop deployment." It said China would deploy jet fighters, fighter-bombers and airborne early-warning equipment, without specifying details.</p> <p>Major media in Thailand said China's force is expected to include six J-10C/S jet fighters, a JH-7AI fighter-bomber and a Shaanxi KJ-500 early warning and control aircraft, while Thailand would deploy eight jet fighters and an early-warning and control aircraft.</p> <p>The U.S.-Thai alliance dates to 1954 amid shared concern about expanding communism. The two militaries have drilled extensively, including in games called Cobra Gold that have since expanded to include other nations. China has had a role in humanitarian-focused activities.</p> <p>Making his first trip to Thailand as U.S. Defense secretary in June, Lloyd Austin met with senior officials, including Thai prime minister and Minister of Defense Prayut Chan-ocha. The two welcomed efforts to expand bilateral training and exercises, discussed cooperation on cyber and space warfare, plus defense industries, according to the U.S. readout, which emphasized a U.S. desire to strengthen interoperability between the nations' forces.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Gen Z professionals turn to 'quiet quitting'
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/if-your-gen-z-co-workers-are-quiet-quitting-heres-what-that-means-11660260608?mod=hp_trending_now_article_pos2
GIST	<p>Not taking your job too seriously has a new name: quiet quitting.</p> <p>The phrase is generating millions of views on TikTok as some young professionals reject the idea of going above and beyond in their careers, labeling their lesser enthusiasm a form of "quitting." It isn't about getting off the company payroll, these employees say. In fact, the idea is to stay on it—but focus your time on the things you do outside of the office.</p> <p>The videos range from sincere ruminations on work-life balance to snarky jokes. Some set firm boundaries against overtime in favor of family. Others advocate coasting from 9-to-5, doing just enough to get by. Many want to untether their careers from their identities.</p> <p>Of course, every generation enters the workforce and quickly realizes that having a job isn't all fun and games. Navigating contemptible bosses and the petty indignities that have always been inflicted on the ranks of working stiffs has never been easy. And many people who say, when they're young, that they don't care about climbing the corporate ladder end up changing their minds.</p> <p>The difference now is that this group has TikTok and hashtags to emote. And these 20-somethings joined the working world during the Covid-19 pandemic, with all of its dislocating effects, including blurred boundaries between work and life. Many workers say they feel they have power to push back in the current strong labor market. Recent data from Gallup shows employee engagement is declining.</p> <p>Clayton Farris, 41 years old, said that when he recently heard about the new term circulating on social media he realized he'd already been doing it by refusing to let work worries rule over him the way they used to.</p> <p>"The most interesting part about it is nothing's changed," he said in his TikTok video. "I still work just as hard. I still get just as much accomplished. I just don't stress and internally rip myself to shreds."</p> <p>Across generations, U.S. employee engagement is falling, according to survey data from Gallup, but Gen Z and younger millennials, born in 1989 and after, reported the lowest engagement of all during the first quarter at 31%.</p>

Jim Harter, chief scientist for Gallup's workplace and well-being research, said workers' descriptions of "quiet quitting" align with a large group of survey respondents that he classifies as "not engaged"—those who will show up to work and do the minimum required but not much else. More than half of workers surveyed by Gallup who were born after 1989—54%—fall into this category.

One factor Gallup uses to measure engagement is whether people feel their work has purpose. Younger employees report that they don't feel that way, the data show. These are the people who are more likely to work passively and look out for themselves over their employers, Dr. Harter said.

Paige West, 24, said she stopped overextending herself at a former position as a transportation analyst in Washington, D.C., less than a year into the job. Work stress had gotten so intense that, she said, her hair was falling out and she couldn't sleep. While looking for a new role, she no longer worked beyond 40 hours each week, didn't sign up for extra training and stopped trying to socialize with colleagues.

"I took a step back and said, 'I'm just going to work the hours I'm supposed to work, that I'm really getting paid to work,'" she said. "Besides that, I'm not going to go extra."

Ms. West said that she found herself more engaged during meetings once she stopped trying so hard, and she received more positive feedback. She left the job last year and is now a full-time freelance virtual assistant making about 75% of her previous salary. She adjusted by moving back to her home state of Florida.

Zaid Khan, a 24-year-old engineer in New York, posted a quiet quitting video that has racked up three million views in two weeks. [In his viral TikTok](#), Mr. Khan explained the concept this way: "You're quitting the idea of going above and beyond."

"You're no longer subscribing to the hustle-culture mentality that work has to be your life," he said. Mr. Khan says he and many of his peers reject the idea that productivity trumps all; they don't see the payoff.

Some online commenters pledged to relax on social media when they had downtime at work. Others say they will follow their job descriptions to the letter, instead of asking for additional assignments.

A new crop of quiet-quitting videos is starting to pop up, denouncing the move as [a cop-out](#), not a cure-all for [burnout](#) or discontentment at work.

People who coast have been fixtures of the office for decades, but many of today's less-invested employees have been able to skate by thanks to remote work, said Elise Freedman, a senior client partner at consulting firm [Korn Ferry](#).

If the economy sours, Ms. Freedman said, less-engaged workers may be more at risk of layoffs. "It's perfectly appropriate that we expect our employees to give their all," she said.

Josh Bittinger, a 32-year-old market-research director at a management-consulting company, said people who stumble on the phrase "quiet quitting" may assume it encourages people to be lazy, when it actually reminds them to not work to the point of burnout.

After years of saying "yes" to everything, in hopes of standing out, Mr. Bittinger said he's learned to say no more, reserves evenings for himself and avoids [checking email on vacation](#).

"I get my job done, my projects done. I'm performing well and I get good feedback," he said. "And I'm able to still take time to just step away from everything."

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SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/fbi-recovered-eleven-sets-of-classified-documents-in-trump-search-inventory-shows-11660324501?mod=hp_lead_pos3
GIST	<p>FBI agents who searched former President Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago home Monday removed 11 sets of classified documents, including some marked as top secret and meant to be only available in special government facilities, according to a search warrant released by a Florida court Friday.</p> <p>The Federal Bureau of Investigation agents took around 20 boxes of items, binders of photos, a handwritten note and the executive grant of clemency for Mr. Trump's ally Roger Stone, a list of items removed from the property shows. Also included in the list was information about the "President of France," according to the three-page list. The list is contained in a seven-page document that also includes the warrant to search the premises which was granted by a federal magistrate judge in Florida.</p> <p>The list includes references to one set of documents marked as "Various classified/TS/SCI documents," an abbreviation that refers to top-secret/sensitive compartmented information. It also says agents collected four sets of top secret documents, three sets of secret documents, and three sets of confidential documents. The list didn't provide any more details about the substance of the documents.</p> <p>Mr. Trump's lawyers argue that the former president used his authority to declassify the material before he left office. While a president has the power to declassify documents, there are federal regulations that lay out a process for doing so.</p> <p>"They could have had it anytime they wanted—and that includes long ago. All they had to do was ask," Mr. Trump said in a statement issued Friday.</p> <p>On Friday afternoon, U.S. Magistrate Judge Bruce Reinhart issued an order making the warrant and inventory list public, after the Justice Department said in a court filing that Mr. Trump's lawyers told federal prosecutors they didn't object to the government's request to unseal the information.</p> <p>The search and seizure warrant, signed by Judge Reinhart, shows that FBI agents sought to search "the 45 Office," as well as "all storage rooms and all other rooms or areas within the premises used or available to be used by [the former president] and his staff and in which boxes or documents could be stored, including all structures or buildings on the estate."</p> <p>They didn't seek access to search private guest rooms, such as those of Mar-a-Lago members, according to the document.</p> <p>The former president and his team don't have the affidavit, which would provide more detail about the FBI's investigation, according to people familiar with the process. An affidavit would explain what evidence, including witnesses, the government had collected and describe why investigators believe that a crime may have been committed. Mr. Trump's lawyers have asked for a more specific account of what was removed from Mar-a-Lago.</p> <p>The disclosure of the warrant and the inventory marks the culmination of an extraordinary week, which began last Friday at 12:12 p.m., when the judge signed off on the unprecedented warrant to search a former president's home. Three days later, at 6:19 p.m., a lawyer for Mr. Trump, Christina Bobb, signed a receipt for the items the FBI took that day.</p> <p>To the Justice Department, the search was the result of a monthslong effort to get the classified documents remaining in Mr. Trump's possession after at least two prior attempts. They were at first primarily interested in securing the documents, but pursued a criminal investigation as they began to doubt that Mr. Trump's team was being forthright about the documents still in their possession, people familiar with the matter said.</p> <p>To Mr. Trump's allies, the search was a heavy-handed approach to obtaining documents they say Mr. Trump was willing to return and was in the process of negotiating the return.</p>

It is unclear how the investigation may progress and whether prosecutors are considering bringing any charges against Mr. Trump or others in connection with the investigation now that the documents have been recovered.

Rep. Markwayne Mullin (R., Okla.)—who sits on the House Intelligence Committee and has questioned the need for the search by federal agents—said Attorney General Merrick Garland should brief the Intelligence Committee. “It’s a high threshold to say it was an immediate national security threat, if it wasn’t an immediate national security threat then I think there’s a lot of questions that need to be answered,” he said.

The warrant said investigators were seeking all records that could be evidence of violations of laws governing the [gathering, transmitting or losing of classified information](#); the [removal of official government records](#); and the [destruction of records in a federal investigation](#).

The U.S. government [has three main levels of classification](#). In ascending order, the levels are confidential, secret and top secret. They are designed to reflect how sensitive a document’s underlying contents are considered, meaning that a breach of a higher classification level could potentially cause more damage to national security.

SCI documents are typically reserved for military, civilians with special clearance, and contractor personnel who work in a Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility, or SCIF, including those who are responsible for the security of a SCIF.

As the investigation progressed, someone familiar with the stored papers told investigators there may still be more sensitive documents on the premises beyond what they had already received in January and June, people familiar with the matter have said.

It is not known when the documents stored at Mar-a-Lago arrived there, during Mr. Trump’s presidency or as he left office.

Mr. Stone didn’t immediately respond for comment.

Mr. Trump, while in office, would regularly feud publicly with French President Emmanuel Macron over [Twitter](#) about various policy disagreements, particularly trade and Mr. Trump’s decision to [withdraw from the Iran nuclear agreement](#). Privately, Mr. Trump used to tell aides that he believed Mr. Macron to be a “leaker” and untrustworthy, according to several former officials. The French embassy didn’t immediately respond for comment.

The search, while Mr. Trump was in New York, [stoked a political firestorm](#) with Republican lawmakers demanding an explanation for the unprecedented search of a former president’s home. The showdown began after the National Archives in January [retrieved more than a dozen boxes of White House documents](#) from the resort earlier this year, some of which officials deemed classified national-security information.

Mr. Garland and FBI officials deliberated for days about whether to respond to the criticism of the search and how much to say, people familiar with discussions said. The attorney general ultimately decided to let the Justice Department’s work speak for itself and directed the agency to request the warrant be unsealed.

Millions of people in the U.S. hold some level of clearance that grants them access to classified documents, though far fewer have access to the highest levels. While intelligence agencies can declassify information and release it to the public, the process for doing so is often slow and may require multiple intelligence agencies to sign off.

A sitting president generally has the authority to unilaterally declassify any material of his or her choosing, but such a privilege is rarely used. Mr. Trump at times did disclose classified information during his time

	<p>in office, including when he tweeted a surveillance satellite image showing damage at an Iranian space facility.</p> <p>While a president has the power to declassify documents, federal regulations lay out a process for doing so. Those rules must be followed for a declassification to become legally effective, said Dan Meyer, a national-security lawyer at Tully Rinckey in Washington.</p> <p>Once Mr. Trump left office on Jan. 20, 2021, he became bound by the same rules as other private citizens, Mr. Meyer said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Calif. crisis: rare megafloods more common
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/12/california-climate-crisis-megafloods
GIST	<p>Driven by the climate crisis, exceedingly rare megafloods will become more common – and more catastrophic – according to a new study that found their likelihood has already doubled in California.</p> <p>The unexpected threat lingers even as browning hillsides, fallowed fields and bathtub ring-laden reservoirs serve as a constant reminder of the drought disaster in the state, which may be woefully unprepared when the coin inevitably flips.</p> <p>“Societally, from a public policy and climate adaptation infrastructure building perspective we are falling behind,” said Dr Daniel Swain, an author on the study, ARkStorm 2.0: Climate change is increasing the risk of a California megaflood, and a climate scientist at the Institute of the Environment & Sustainability at the University of California, Los Angeles.</p> <p>“Our goal in doing this work is to get ahead of the curve as much as we can when it comes to the risk of megaflood,” he said. “We know that eventually it will happen and that climate change is upping the odds.”</p> <p>Combining climate and high-resolution weather models, the scientists were able to analyze two separate scenarios – the present danger, and a future where risks are amplified by the climate crisis. The approach provides an accurate picture of what’s to come. The researchers found with a high-emissions trajectory, the annual likelihood of a 200-year-event would increase by 683% by 2060.</p> <p>They built on the findings from a 2010 analysis called “ARkStorm,” led by the US Geological Survey with an interdisciplinary team, that concluded a series of severe storms had the potential to pelt the state with enough rainfall to displace millions, impair critical infrastructure and transportation corridors, and cause close to \$1tn in economic losses.</p> <p>The hypothetical event has been referred to as California’s “other Big One”, in reference to a large-magnitude earthquake expected to strike sometime in the future. But this megaflood would rival even the shaking of the earth, exceeding damages “by a considerable margin”, according to the study. Floods are being made worse by wildfires and drought, which change the landscapes and make debris flows more likely when water rises.</p> <p>California’s floods differ from other parts of the world, and are typically caused by atmospheric rivers – strong storms that dump large amounts of water at once. A long sequence of them, where severe storms hit in quick succession, could quickly overwhelm landscapes and infrastructure. And, while wetting storms were once welcome in the parched state, “atmospheric river storms in a warming climate are likely going to shift from being primarily beneficial to primarily hazardous – that’s a big shift,” Swain said.</p> <p>Already, the state has had to grapple with whiplash when it comes to extreme weather and it’s not alone.</p> <p>In just the past two weeks, there have been at least four extreme floods in the US, events once cast as 1,000-year storms with a 0.1% likelihood of happening in a given year. Extreme precipitation events have</p>

increased by 55% in the north-east since the 1950s, according to the federal government's national climate assessment, 42% in the midwest, and 27% in the south-east.

But in the west, where the predominant focus is drought, states like California may be even less prepared for rising waters.

“[Warming] is both juicing out the winter storms, making them more extreme and amplifying flood risk, but also supercharging the capacity of the atmosphere to suck that water right back out of the landscape and make droughts worse as well,” Swain said, calling the issues two sides of the same thermodynamic coin.

Testing the country's resiliency

California typically has a wet season during its winter months, and the state depends on the snowpack generated during that time as a water savings account of sorts, that slowly trickles into rivers and streams. But warming has resulted in less snow and more rain, an issue that both increases flood risks and leaves less water for use during dry times. Water also doesn't go as far as it once did. Thirsty landscapes require more to survive the heat all while the atmosphere is more apt to quickly suck moisture from the soil.

Compounding catastrophes, or the layering of disasters like drought, floods and fires that overlap, are already testing the capacity of the country's resiliency and straining resources. As they become more likely, agencies are struggling to keep pace, both in California and beyond.

“The field of emergency management is at a pivotal moment in its history,” the Fema administrator, Deanne Criswell, said during a hearing of the House homeland security subcommittee on emergency preparedness, response and recovery. The agency is managing more than triple the amount of disasters this year as it did a decade ago.

Last year, the US spent an alarming \$145bn on natural disasters – the third highest amount on record – and grappled with 20 extreme events that cost more than \$1bn each, close to triple the average since 1980. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (Fema) is already bracing for an escalation in need this year and for the ones that follow, requesting \$19.7bn for its 2023 disaster relief fund.

“The changing climate is the biggest crisis facing our nation and makes natural disasters more frequent and more destructive,” Criswell said. “While our mission itself has not changed, our operating environment has.”

Swain said he hopes officials will heed the call cast by the findings from his work and other climate scientists who have outlined the threats.

“This has major public policy and disaster preparedness implications,” he said. While this approach was tailored specifically to California and its unique weather patterns, he hopes the work can help frame research into risks of megaflood in other areas as well.

“Nobody could possibly argue we didn't see this coming if and when it hits,” Swain said. “There's still potentially time to do something about it before things go haywire.”

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HEADLINE	08/13 Day 171 of the Russia invasion
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/13/russia-ukraine-war-what-we-know-on-day-171-of-the-invasion
GIST	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ukraine's military said its artillery hit a Russian ammunition depot near a key bridge in the south and added it now had the ability to strike nearly all of Moscow's supply lines in the occupied region. Reuters reported there was no immediate comment from Russian authorities on the report of the attack in Kherson province, or the purported reach of Ukraine's firepower.

- **The UN has urged a demilitarised zone around Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant** as Russia and Ukraine trade accusations over more shelling. Ukraine's nuclear energy company said the facility in the country's south-east had been shelled five times by Russian forces on Thursday, resulting in staff being unable to change shifts. Valentyn Reznichenko, the Dnipropetrovsk region's governor, reportedly said three civilians – including a boy – were wounded in overnight shelling on Friday in Marhanets, a town opposite the plant.
- **The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, has told government officials to stop talking to reporters about Kyiv's military tactics against [Russia](#)**, saying such remarks are “frankly irresponsible”. In the wake of major blasts that wrecked a Russian air base in Crimea on Tuesday, the New York Times and Washington Post newspapers cited unidentified officials as saying Ukrainian forces were responsible. The government in Kyiv, on the other hand, declined to say whether it had been behind the explosions.
- **The UK Ministry of Defence has said the explosions at the Russian-operated Saky military airfield in western Crimea earlier in the week were “almost certainly” from the detonation of up to four uncovered munition storage areas**, though what set them off remained unclear. At least five Su-24 Fencer fighter-bombers and three Su-30 Flanker H multi-role jets were almost certainly destroyed or seriously damaged in the blasts, according to British intelligence.
- **The devastation at the Russian air base in Crimea suggests Kyiv may have obtained new long-range strike capability** with potential to change the course of the war. The base is well beyond the range of advanced rockets that western countries acknowledge sending to Ukraine so far, with some western military experts saying the scale of the damage and the apparent precision of the strike [suggested a powerful new capability](#) with potentially important implications.
- **Ukraine's security agencies issued a joint statement calling for the [United Nations](#) and the International Committee of the Red Cross to send representatives to locations where Russia is holding Ukrainian prisoners of war.** The request on Friday follows earlier allegations by Kyiv that Moscow's forces have tortured and executed prisoners, including by staging an explosion in a Ukrainian PoW camp in Olenivka.
- **Volodymyr Zelenskiy tweeted that he spoke with Pope Francis** on Friday. “Informed about the aggression that the Russian Federation is carrying out against [Ukraine](#), about the terrible crimes of Russia,” the president wrote on Twitter.
- **Ukraine's defence minister, Oleksii Reznikov, has said a shipment of M20 MLRS tanks has arrived in [Ukraine](#).** In a tweet, he thanked the UK's defence minister, Ben Wallace, and British people for the donation, which had been pledged earlier. “Your support is amazing and so important for Ukraine.”
- **Jose Andres, whose World Central Kitchen group has served more than 130m meals in [Ukraine](#) since Russia's invasion in February, called for better coordination of food relief efforts** ahead of what promises to be a brutal winter. Donations were easing as the war dragged on, he warned, which meant that WCK, which provides short-term emergency relief, must start winding down operations just as cold weather is likely to exacerbate problems facing millions of displaced Ukrainians.
- **India said on Friday there was no pressure on it from western countries or anywhere else over its energy purchases from Russia**, as Indian firms step up imports of oil and coal from the country shunned by others for its invasion of [Ukraine](#). India, the world's third-biggest crude importer, overtook China to become the biggest buyer of Russian oil in July based on sea-borne volumes, having bought very little from Russia before the start of the war in Ukraine in February.

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HEADLINE	08/12 WHO plans to rename monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/12/who-plans-to-rename-monkeypox-over-stigmatization/
GIST	<p>LONDON — The World Health Organization says it's holding an open forum to rename the disease monkeypox, after some critics raised concerns the name could be derogatory or have racist connotations.</p> <p>In a statement Friday, the U.N. health agency said it has also renamed two families, or clades, of the virus, using Roman numerals instead of geographic areas, to avoid stigmatization. The version of the disease</p>

formerly known as the Congo Basin will now be known as Clade one or I and the West Africa clade will be known as Clade two or II.

WHO said the decision was made following a meeting of scientists this week and in line with current best practices for naming diseases, which aims to “avoid causing offense to any cultural, social, national, regional, professional, or ethnic groups, and minimize any negative impact on trade, travel, tourism or animal welfare.”

Numerous other diseases, including Japanese encephalitis, Marburg virus, Spanish influenza and Middle Eastern Respiratory Syndrome have been named after the geographic areas where they first arose or were identified. WHO has not publicly suggested changing any of those names.

Monkeypox was first named in 1958 when research monkeys in Denmark were observed to have a “pox-like” disease, although they are not thought to be the animal reservoir.

WHO said it was also opening a way for the public to suggest new names for monkeypox, but did not say when any new name would be announced.

To date, there have been more than 31,000 cases of monkeypox identified globally since May, with the majority of those beyond Africa. Monkeypox has been endemic in parts of central and west Africa for decades and was not known to trigger large outbreaks beyond the continent until May.

WHO declared the global spread of monkeypox to be an international emergency in July and the U.S. declared its own epidemic to be a national emergency earlier this month.

Outside of Africa, 98% of cases are in men who have sex with men. With only a limited global supply of vaccines, authorities are racing to stop monkeypox before it becomes entrenched as a new disease.

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HEADLINE	08/12 New CDC Covid-19 guidelines
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/health/covid-cdc-guidelines.html
GIST	<p>The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention relaxed many of its Covid-19 guidelines this week, shifting sharply away from several of the precautions, including quarantines and social distancing, that have long defined the pandemic.</p> <p>The move was prompted by the fact that many Americans now have some immunity to the coronavirus — through a combination of vaccination and previous infection — and by the availability of vaccines, booster shots and antiviral medications that can reduce the risk of severe disease.</p> <p>Part of the public health agency’s goal in issuing the new guidance was to streamline the recommendations and help people manage their own risk, officials said. But the guidelines are still complex and contain plenty of nuance.</p> <p>Here are answers to some common questions about what the guidelines mean for you.</p> <p>Do I still have to stand six feet away from strangers?</p> <p>The C.D.C. has not abandoned the idea of social distancing entirely — instead, the agency suggests keeping a distance from others as one of many strategies that people can use to help reduce their risk.</p> <p>The old guidelines recommended that people who were not up-to-date on their vaccinations “stay at least six feet away from other people” in indoor public spaces.</p>

Now, the agency recommends that people “may want to avoid crowded areas” or maintain a distance from others in order to minimize their exposure to the virus. This precaution may be especially important for people who are at high risk for severe Covid-19, the agency noted.

Do I still have to wear a face mask?

The general mask guidelines have not changed. The C.D.C. still recommends that everyone age 2 and older wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor spaces when the local [Covid-19 community level](#) is high. People who are at high risk for severe disease should also wear a mask when their communities are at the medium level, according to the guidelines.

Nearly [40 percent of counties](#) across the United States are at a high community level, according to the C.D.C.

What should I do if I’ve been exposed to the virus?

As a precautionary measure, the C.D.C. used to recommend that people who were not up-to-date on their vaccinations and had been in close contact with someone with Covid-19 stay home for at least five days, a practice known as quarantining. (People who were up-to-date on their shots did not need to quarantine if they were asymptomatic, according to the previous guidelines.)

The quarantine recommendation has disappeared, one of the biggest changes in the new guidance.

“Quarantines are sort of a blunt tool,” said Jennifer Nuzzo, the director of the Pandemic Center at the Brown University School of Public Health. “I do think we have to shift in how we think about controlling this virus.”

Now, people [who have been exposed](#) to the virus can continue with their daily routines regardless of their vaccination status, as long as they remain asymptomatic. However, they should wear a well-fitting mask for 10 full days, monitor themselves for symptoms, take extra safety measures around vulnerable people and get tested at least five days after exposure.

If you use an at-home antigen test, you may need to test yourself repeatedly. To reduce the risk of false negative results, people who have no symptoms should take at least three tests, each 48 hours apart, according to [a new recommendation](#) from the Food and Drug Administration. People who do have Covid-19 symptoms should take at least two tests 48 hours apart.

“Your viral load grows after you get infected,” said Dr. Michael Mina, a former Harvard epidemiologist who is now the chief science officer for eMed, which sells at-home tests. “It goes up, and that takes time.”

What should I do if I test positive for the virus?

Isolate at home for at least five days, and keep your distance from others in your household. This recommendation has not changed.

If you remained asymptomatic during your time in isolation — or if your symptoms are improving and you have been fever-free for at least a day — you can leave isolation after Day 5, according to the guidelines.

Previously, the C.D.C. recommended that people with Covid-19 wear a mask for 10 full days. Under the new guidelines, people can remove their masks sooner if they test negative on two rapid antigen tests, taken at least 48 hours apart. Others should continue to mask for 10 days.

People who experience moderate to severe illness, or have compromised immune systems, should isolate for at least 10 days, the agency said.

If symptoms return after isolation, people should start their isolation periods over, according to the new guidelines.

What does this mean for schools and offices?

In theory, the new guidelines could free many schools and businesses from some of the restrictive measures that have been difficult to enforce, including navigating a different set of rules for vaccinated and unvaccinated people. Quarantines have been especially disruptive and divisive in schools.

Under the new guidelines, children who have been in close contact with someone who has Covid-19 do not need to stay home, and schools do not need to administer frequent tests in order to keep these children in the classroom, an approach known as “[test to stay](#).” Contact tracing and routine surveillance testing of asymptomatic people are no longer necessary in most settings, the C.D.C. said.

In reality, the new guidelines may not change much at many schools, which had increasingly [been moving away](#) from these measures. Massachusetts, for instance, dropped its [quarantine requirements for asymptomatic children](#) in May.

Still, some districts and officials do take their cues from the federal guidance, which could prompt some localities to relax their rules for the coming academic year.

“We welcome these guidelines,” Randi Weingarten, the president of the American Federation of Teachers, said in a statement on Thursday. “Every educator and every parent starts every school year with great hope, and this year even more so. After two years of uncertainty and disruption, we need as normal a year as possible so we can focus like a laser on what kids need.”

In an email to The New York Times on Friday, the New York State Department of Health said it was reviewing the new C.D.C. recommendations and would issue its own back-to-school guidance “soon.”

New York City’s Department of Health and Mental Hygiene said on Friday that it was also reviewing the new federal guidelines and still finalizing plans for the coming school year.

The C.D.C.’s [guidelines](#) said schools that are experiencing outbreaks may want to temporarily adopt additional precautions, including surveillance testing, contact tracing, mask-wearing and open windows and doors to improve ventilation.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Aid helps Ukraine reach outweighed gains
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/13/world/europe/aid-helps-ukraine-achieve-outweighed-gains.html
GIST	<p>As the war drags on, Ukraine has managed to hold off Russian gains for the past month thanks in large part to continued support from the United States and its European allies, and help on the ground from partisans.</p> <p>Following months of grinding war in which Ukraine has lost territory, Kyiv has been able to stem Russian advances recently and force Russia to sustain heavy losses, with up to 500 Russian troops killed or injured every day, according to some estimates.</p> <p>John Spencer, a retired Army officer and chair of urban warfare studies for the Madison Policy Forum research institute, said that while Ukraine has lost tactical ground in some regions, its troops have succeeded in weakening Russia’s military.</p> <p>“They have also made Russians expend resources that they can’t replenish,” Mr. Spencer said. “You don’t want to say they’re winning the war because there’s so much fighting to be done, but from really every measure you think about, especially geopolitically and militarily, they’re achieving outweighed gains.”</p> <p>Russia still maintains a huge advantage in the size of its weapons arsenal, and Ukraine has suffered heavily over the course of the war. As many as 200 soldiers were being killed each day at one point; the civilian death toll has topped 5,000, according to United Nations estimates; and several of the country’s</p>

cities have been flattened. But Moscow has had no major territorial gains since the capture of the eastern Luhansk Province in late June.

Ukraine was bolstered on Thursday when the defense ministers of 26 countries, including Britain and Denmark, pledged [about \\$1.55 billion in military aid to Ukraine](#). Ben Wallace, Britain's defense minister, said the aid would include additional multiple-launch rocket systems and long-range missiles.

"We are not getting tired," Mr. Wallace said of his country's continued support for Ukraine.

Morten Bodskov, Denmark's defense minister, said his country would not just help with weapons, but that it would also assist in training service members.

The aid, which Mr. Zelensky has called for repeatedly since the war began, added to another package from the United States that was announced earlier this week. The Pentagon said on Monday that it would send more ammunition in [a new shipment of up to \\$1 billion](#) worth of weapons and supplies. With that, the United States will have sent more than \$9 billion in aid to Ukraine since Russia invaded the country on Feb. 24.

Mr. Spencer said that maintaining such continued support from Western countries has taken "as much fighting as actually fighting Russian forces, as far as showing the world that they're fighting a just war."

Support for the country has not only come in the form of aid packages, but also through help on the ground in the form of partisans, [resistance fighters who aid the Ukrainian military](#) on Russian-occupied territory.

At least five fighter bombers and three multi-role jets were "almost certainly destroyed or seriously damaged" this week in blasts at an air base in Crimea, according to a British military intelligence report on Friday. Crimea — which Moscow annexed in 2014 — has largely avoided attacks since February and the base was far from any recognizable front line.

One senior Ukrainian official said the attacks were carried out with the help of partisans, but the government has not taken responsibility for the attack.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, has reported that "the Kremlin is scrambling to find any reinforcements" to replenish its decimated ranks of troops.

It said Saturday there were growing indications that Moscow would continue to expand the Kremlin's direct control over Russia's weapons manufacturers and other military-related industries as it tries to bolster a prolonged war effort.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Kremlin behind Balkans flare ups?
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/13/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#some-see-the-kremlin-at-work-in-balkans-flare-ups-aiming-to-deflect-natos-attention-from-ukraine-war
GIST	<p>BELGRADE, Serbia — Serbia's strongman leader, Aleksandar Vucic, is fed up with being reviled as a "little Putin" intent on aggression against his country's fragile neighbors in the Balkans.</p> <p>For starters, Mr. Vucic noted wryly in an interview in the library of the presidential palace this month, "I am almost two meters tall." That makes him about 6-foot-5. (Vladimir V. Putin is an estimated 5-foot-7 at most, though the Russian president's exact height, a sensitive topic for the Kremlin, is a secret.)</p> <p>Behind Mr. Vucic's levity over physical stature, however, lurks a serious question that torments the Balkans and preoccupies Western diplomats.</p> <p>Is Russia, mired in a brutal war in Ukraine, using Serbia to stir division in Europe and provoke renewed conflict in the former Yugoslavia to distract NATO from the battle raging to the east?</p>

Those fears [flared last week](#) when an esoteric dispute over license plates between Serbia, which is bound to Russia by history, religion and deep hostility toward NATO, and the formerly Serbian province of Kosovo led to unruly protests, roadblocks and gunfire — setting off alarm bells in the Atlantic alliance.

The unrest in Kosovo, and [strains in nearby Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) caused by Milorad Dodik, the belligerent, Moscow-backed leader of the ethnic Serb enclave there, and by hard-line Croat nationalists have led to warnings that Russia is trying to stoke tensions, stilled but never really resolved, from the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

“Russia calculates that the more time the West spends sweating in the Balkans, the less time it will spend sweating in Russia’s backyard,” said Vuk Vuksanovic, a researcher at the Belgrade Center for Security Policy.

“But there are limits on what Russia can do,” Mr. Vuksanovic added. “It needs local elites, and these don’t want to be sacrificed for Russian interests.”

America’s ambassador to Serbia, Christopher R. Hill, a veteran diplomatic troubleshooter whose recent appointment signaled Washington’s heightened anxiety over the Balkans, said that Russia, offering only “economic blackmail” and “chaos throughout the region,” had found few takers.

“Despite Russia’s influence on Serbia’s energy sector and despite its pervasive disinformation efforts here, Serbs have decided that their future is with Europe and the West,” Mr. Hill said.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Russia warns US against terrorism label
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/13/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#a-russian-official-warns-of-serious-collateral-damage-if-the-us-designates-russia-a-sponsor-of-terrorism
GIST	<p>A senior Russian diplomat has warned that Moscow might rupture diplomatic relations with Washington if the United States designates Russia a state sponsor of terrorism, the latest in a range of diplomatic sparring in recent days between the Kremlin and capitals that support Kyiv.</p> <p>A terrorist designation would cause “the most serious collateral damage to bilateral diplomatic relations,” Alexander Darchiev, the director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s department for North America, told the official news agency TASS in a brief interview published on Saturday.</p> <p>It could result in lowering or breaking off ties entirely, he said, adding, “The U.S. side has been warned.”</p> <p>The Kremlin was also sharply critical of recent calls by Western nations to bar all visitors from Russia, including students, tourists and business executives. Dmitri S. Peskov, the presidential spokesman in Russia, said such attempts to isolate Russia were bound to fail.</p> <p>Both issues have been pressed by President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine.</p> <p>The Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have said that they will stop issuing tourist visas to Russians. Estonia and Finland called for a collective European Union ban, but other nations rejected the idea, with Germany saying that such a move would harm “innocent people.”</p> <p>Russians who fled abroad to escape the Kremlin’s draconian measures to imprison critics of the war, as well as President Vladimir V. Putin’s increased repression generally, have also been critical. Tens of thousands of Russians are trying to establish new lives abroad, and some of the most outspoken would face jail if they were forced to return to Russia.</p> <p>On Thursday, Latvia’s Parliament declared Russia a “state sponsor of terrorism” for its attacks on civilians in Ukraine. A statement by lawmakers accused the Kremlin of using “suffering and intimidation as tools in</p>

its attempts to demoralize the Ukrainian people and armed forces and paralyze the functioning of the state.”

Latvia encouraged other countries to make similar declarations. But Maria Zakharova, the spokeswoman for Russia’s Foreign Ministry, dismissed the move as “anti-Russian hysteria.”

In Washington, the Senate unanimously passed a nonbinding resolution in late July calling on Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken to designate Russia as a sponsor of terrorism for its brutal military campaign in Ukraine as well as earlier wars in Chechnya, Georgia and Syria. The resolution noted that the Russian attacks had resulted in “the deaths of countless innocent men, women and children.”

The House is weighing an even stronger resolution that would add Russia to the list regardless of whether the State Department, which holds the authority to make the designation, does so.

Mr. Blinken has resisted adding Russia to a list that now includes Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Syria. He has said that the costs already imposed on Russia through sanctions and other means parallel those that the designation would bring.

The terrorist designation could widen them, however, opening the door to secondary sanctions on countries that do business with Russia and allowing for lawsuits in U.S. courts.

The push by Congress comes at a sensitive time, with the Biden administration trying to negotiate a prisoner swap that would lead to the release from Russian prisons of at least two Americans — Brittney Griner, the professional basketball star, and Paul Whelan, an American tourist and former Marine.

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HEADLINE	08/13 New shelling at Ukraine nuclear plant
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/13/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#europe-joins-the-us-in-calling-for-a-demilitarized-zone-around-a-ukrainian-nuclear-power-plant
GIST	<p>The Ukrainian military on Saturday reported renewed shelling at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant complex in southern Ukraine, hours after the European Union late Friday joined the United States in calling for a demilitarized zone to be created around the plant immediately.</p> <p>International concern has grown as shelling at the plant raises the risk of igniting a fire or causing other damage that could spiral out of control and lead to a nuclear accident.</p> <p>Ukraine has accused Russia of directing strikes there to cut off energy supplies to other cities and to try to discredit the Ukrainian military in the world’s eyes. The Russians say Ukraine is doing the shelling.</p> <p>On Saturday, the Ukrainian military intelligence agency accused Russia of using the occupied town of Vodyane, which is near the plant, as a staging ground to shell the facility. They also accused Russia of planning a false-flag propaganda event to make it appear that the Ukrainians are responsible for the hostilities around the complex.</p> <p>The intelligence agency said that, among other things, Russian forces were flying Ukrainian flags in positions where their artillery was located.</p> <p>The claims could not be independently verified, but they reflect the Ukrainian belief that Russia is using the plant as a form of nuclear blackmail aimed at scaring the Ukrainians and their international allies about the consequences of any effort to reclaim land now occupied by Russia.</p> <p>It was not immediately clear what damage was caused by the renewed shelling on Saturday.</p> <p>Both sides would suffer if a meltdown occurred at the plant, Europe’s largest, and spread radioactive material.</p>

	<p>While such plants are designed to withstand a range of risk — from a plane crashing into the facility to natural disasters — no operating nuclear power plant has ever been in the middle of active fighting, and this one was not designed with the threat of cruise missiles in mind.</p> <p>The concrete shell of the site's six reactors offer strong protection, as was the case when the No. 1 reactor was struck in March, officials say. More worrying is the chance that a power transformer is hit by shelling, raising the risk of a fire.</p> <p>If a fire were to break out at the power transformers and the electric network were taken offline, that could cause a breakdown of the plant's cooling system and lead to a catastrophic meltdown, said Edwin Lyman, a nuclear power expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists, a private group in Cambridge, Mass.</p> <p>He noted that the loss of coolant during the Fukushima accident in Japan in 2011 had resulted in three reactors undergoing some degree of core meltdown.</p> <p>If the cooling is interrupted, Dr. Lyman said, the nuclear fuel could become hot enough to melt in a matter of hours. Eventually, it could melt through the steel reactor vessel and even the outer containment structure, releasing radioactive material.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Ukraine aims to 'fight in a different way'
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/live/2022/08/13/world/ukraine-russia-news-war#ukraine-facing-russias-greater-military-might-aims-to-fight-in-a-different-way
GIST	<p>KYIV, Ukraine — Despite suffering grievous losses over nearly six months of war, Russia still holds a distinct advantage over Ukraine in a head-to-head fight featuring brutal artillery battles. So the Ukrainian military is seeking to wage the war on its own terms.</p> <p>Supplied with a growing arsenal of long-range Western weapons and aided by local fighters known as partisans, Ukraine has claimed to hit Russian forces deep behind enemy lines, disrupting critical supply lines and, increasingly, striking targets that are key to Moscow's combat potential. One blow to the Russians this week was a series of explosions at an air base on the occupied Crimean Peninsula that a Ukrainian official said had resulted from a strike carried out with the help of local fighters.</p> <p>And on Saturday, the Ukrainians claimed to have hit the last of four key bridges spanning the Dnipro River in southern Ukraine, leaving thousands of Russian troops further isolated and cut off from resupply, according to Western intelligence officials.</p> <p>"Of course, they will try to repair, look for an alternative in the crossings," Serhii Khlan, an adviser to the head of Kherson region's military administration, said in a Facebook post. "But it is time, money, and then as soon as they prepare and gain equipment and strength — we will destroy it again."</p> <p>It was the latest move in a campaign aimed at retaking southern territory that Russia captured in the first days of the war, a push that the Ukrainians hope is weakening Moscow's forces to the point that they will be forced to retreat.</p> <p>The change in Ukraine's tactics has not resulted in major territorial gains. But it has managed to stop the Russian advance across the country and stem the heavy losses Ukraine was experiencing in the spring, when as many as 200 of its soldiers were dying per day.</p> <p>The main Russian effort in eastern Ukraine is now focused on trying to gain ground in the Donetsk region, and there has been intense fighting in recent days in the area around the town of Pisky. Russia's defense ministry said on Saturday that the town had fallen, a claim that could not be independently verified.</p>

Ukraine's Defense Minister, Oleksii Reznikov, said this past week that the American and British defense ministers had both offered him a piece of advice: "The Russians use meat-grinder tactics — if you plan to fight them with the same tactics, we will not be able to help you," Mr. Reznikov said in an interview with Pravda, a Ukrainian news media outlet.

"We do not have the resources to litter the territory with bodies and shells, as Russia does," he said. "Therefore it is necessary to change tactics, to fight in a different way."

Rather than engaging head on and trying to beat the Russians with brute force, they are employing a strategy of death by a thousand cuts.

Critical to Russia's efforts to hold onto land in Ukraine's south is Moscow's control over Crimea, which Russia illegally annexed in 2014. Before its full-scale invasion of Ukraine early this year, Moscow sent tens of thousands of soldiers to the peninsula, and they captured large swaths of the southern regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia within days.

Since then, rail lines from Crimea have been critical in enabling Moscow to move heavy weapons and equipment into southern Ukraine. Last week, Britain's defense intelligence agency said that the Ukrainians had hit a key train line from the peninsula, making it "highly unlikely the rail link connecting Kherson with Crimea remains operational."

The Russians will likely race to repair it, the agency said, but the attack underscored a critical vulnerability.

Then, on Tuesday, a series of explosions ripped through a Russian naval air base in Crimea, destroying at least eight Russian combat jets and delivering a severe blow to the Russian Black Sea Fleet's naval aviation capability, according to Western military analysts.

Whatever the cause of the explosions, they not only were a symbolically embarrassing episode for the Kremlin, but also underscored Russia's vulnerabilities in the southern theater.

Vitaliy Kim, the head of the military administration in Mykolaiv, where Ukraine's military is staging forces for its counteroffensive, said the flexibility of its approach offered a distinct advantage.

"The Russians are working by the book, deploying battle formations as it was laid out in the Soviet Union," he said in an interview this past week. "Our guys have read this book and understand it perfectly well, and are using it for their own goals."

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HEADLINE	08/12 Guide to monkeypox health emergency
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/08/the-ars-guide-to-the-monkeypox-outbreak-a-national-and-global-emergency/
GIST	<p>On May 7, health officials in the UK reported a case of monkeypox in a person who had recently traveled to Nigeria. The case was very rare but not necessarily alarming; a small number of travel-related cases of monkeypox pop up now and then. The UK logged seven such cases between 2018 and 2021. But this year, the cases kept coming.</p> <p>By May 16, the UK had reported six additional cases, mostly unconnected, and all unrelated to travel, suggesting domestic transmission. On May 18, Portugal reported five confirmed cases and more than 20 suspected ones. The same day, health officials in Massachusetts reported the first US case. Spain, meanwhile, issued an outbreak alert after 23 people showed signs of the unusual infection. Cases in Italy and Sweden followed.</p> <p>In the past, monkeypox transmission largely fizzled out on its own. Experts did not consider the virus to be easily transmissible. Still, the cases kept coming. By May 26, the multinational outbreak had exceeded 300</p>

cases in over 20 countries. At the time, the US had only nine cases confirmed, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced that it presumed domestic community transmission was already underway. In early June, the global tally exceeded 1,300 from 31 countries, including 45 cases in the US.

As June turned into July, health experts around the world scrambled to address the mushrooming outbreak. On July 23, with global cases at over 16,000 from more than 70 countries, [the World Health Organization declared the monkeypox outbreak a public health emergency of international concern \(PHEIC\)](#). It's the agency's highest level of alert—and a level many health experts said should have been reached in June.

Soon after the PHEIC declaration, the US took the global lead for the highest monkeypox case tally. And on August 4, with over 6,600 cases in 48 states, the [US government declared the outbreak a public health emergency](#).

As of August 10, just over four months since the first case was reported in the UK, there are around 32,000 monkeypox cases reported from at least 89 countries, including at least [12 deaths](#). The [US case count](#) is now nearly 10,400.

Below is a practical reference guide for all the important information on this global and national health emergency. The guide will be updated periodically as new information becomes available.

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What is monkeypox?

The virus

Monkeypox is a virus—an enveloped double-stranded DNA virus, to be specific. It belongs to the *Orthopoxvirus* genus of the *Poxviridae* family, which also includes the variola virus, the cause of smallpox. The monkeypox virus causes a disease similar to that of its eradicated relative, but the disease (also called monkeypox) is generally less severe.

Animal hosts

The name "monkeypox" is a bit of a misnomer. The name came about because the virus was first discovered among monkeys at a [research facility in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1958](#). The virus caused two non-fatal outbreaks that year at the facility after shipments of Asian monkeys arrived from Singapore.

However, monkeys are not the sole or even the primary host for the virus—the research animals just happened to be where the virus was first spotted. The virus can infect a wide range of non-human primates and rodents, including rope squirrels, tree squirrels, Gambian pouched rats, dormice, and prairie dogs. It's still unclear exactly which animals act as its reservoir—its natural host—but experts think the reservoir is most likely rodents, not monkeys.

Where it's usually found

The monkeypox virus is endemic to countries in Western and Central Africa, typically in tropical rainforest areas. The WHO considers monkeypox-endemic countries to include Benin, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Ghana (identified in animals only), Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo, and Sierra Leone.

The first human case of monkeypox was identified in a 9-month-old baby boy in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1970.

Clades

There are two clades of monkeypox virus, which are currently named based on their geography: the West African clade and the Congo Basin clade. Of the two, the West African clade is considered milder, with a case fatality rate of 3.6 percent compared with the Congo Basin clade's 10.6 percent rate, according to the WHO. For the clades' geographical distributions, Cameroon acts as the dividing line. It is the only country in which both clades have been identified.

The milder West African clade is the one circulating in the current outbreak.

Naming controversies

The misnomer virus and disease names and the geographically linked clade names have all drawn criticism during the current outbreak. Health experts now regard them as misleading, stigmatizing, and having racist overtones. As such, the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, which has authority over naming viruses, is considering revising the name of the virus. The WHO, which has authority over the disease name, is considering changing the name. But such changes could take a long time and will require buy-in from the scientific community.

What are the symptoms of monkeypox?

People infected with the virus usually develop symptoms between six to 13 days after exposure, but the incubation can range from five to 21 days.

Historically, monkeypox cases begin with a flu-like illness that lasts between one and three days with symptoms that can include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Intense headache
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Back pain
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue/loss of energy
- Respiratory symptoms: sore throat, nasal congestion, and cough
- In some instances, gastrointestinal symptoms, such as diarrhea, nausea, and vomiting

After this stage of this illness, the characteristic rash usually develops. Historically, lesions have formed all over the body and concentrate on the face and extremities, particularly the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. The lesions go through four stages, beginning as flat, discolored spots (macules) that become raised and painful (papules). They then fill with clear liquid (vesicles) and then with pus (pustules). Finally, the pustules crust over, forming a scab that eventually falls off.

This rash can last two to four weeks in all. A person is considered no longer infectious only after all the lesions' scabs have fallen off, and a fresh layer of skin has formed in their place.

Complications of monkeypox can include secondary infections, bronchopneumonia, sepsis, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), and an eye infection, which can lead to vision loss. Those most at risk of severe outcomes include those with compromised immune systems, children, and pregnant people.

As mentioned above, the historic fatality rate among infections with the milder West African clade is estimated to be 3.6 percent, and the Congo Basin clade's fatality rate has been 10.6 percent.

How the disease is presenting in this outbreak

In this outbreak, many cases have not fit the mold of previous monkeypox diseases. For instance, many cases have been linked to sexual activity. As such, many patients have reported lesions occurring in the mouth and genital and anal areas. Sometimes the rashes are not spreading over the whole body, and there may only be a few lesions or even a single one.

Moreover, some infected people are not experiencing a flu-like illness before their rash. Some are experiencing it after developing a rash or not at all. For these reasons, many cases have initially been mistaken for common sexually transmitted infections, such as herpes, syphilis, and gonorrhea. Many have described the lesions as excruciating, and some people have been hospitalized for pain management. Lastly, many have reported rectal symptoms, including rectal pain, rectal swelling, and passing stools with pus or blood.

"We're seeing new manifestations of illness," Rosamund Lewis, WHO's technical lead for monkeypox, said in a recent question-and-answer event. Those new manifestations include conditions "that can be extremely painful and need medical care, such as secondary infections or such as inflammation or swelling of the rectum," she said.

Though deaths have been rare in the current outbreak, some have occurred in people with compromised immune systems. Others have occurred in otherwise healthy people after they developed encephalitis, a known complication of monkeypox.

How does monkeypox spread?

Generally, the monkeypox virus transmits through direct touch, close-range respiratory droplets over a prolonged time, and through contact with highly contaminated materials, such as bed linens and clothes that have touched people's skin lesions. Overall, the lesions are considered the primary concern, as they are teeming with virions.

The virus can also transmit from a pregnant person to a fetus. Infections during pregnancy can lead to complications, congenital defects, and stillbirths.

In the current outbreak, the virus is primarily spreading through sexual networks of men who have sex with men (MSM) during sexual activity.

Past spread

In the decades since monkeypox was discovered, experts have considered it to be a virus that is *not* easily spread. Prior to the current outbreak, human cases usually only occurred when the virus would spill over from an animal host in an endemic region. People most at risk were hunters or people who handled bushmeat. Being bitten or scratched by an infected animal can also transmit the virus.

In these past spillover events, the virus didn't spread far. The WHO notes that the longest documented chains of transmission before the current outbreak included just six to nine successive jumps from person to person before transmission hit a dead end. Those transmission chains were usually limited to health care workers and household members—those who would have close, intimate, prolonged contact with an infected person.

Spread in the current outbreak

In the current outbreak, the virus is clearly spreading in longer chains. And so far, it's unclear why. Experts suspect it could be due to the end of smallpox vaccination, which would have offered cross-protection; an evolution of the virus that allowed it to spread more easily; an exploitation of a new route of transmission—i.e., through sexual networks during sexual activity; or some combination of those factors.

Even so, monkeypox hasn't wholly changed during this outbreak. It's still not an easily transmissible virus. The vast majority of cases are occurring through sexual contact. Thus, as before, transmission is occurring through close, often intimate, prolonged contact—skin-to-skin contact and close face-to-face interactions over an extended period.

The CDC has an explicit description of what that means in this outbreak: "oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals (penis, testicles, labia, and vagina) or anus (butthole) of a person with monkeypox." Hugging, massaging, kissing, and face-to-face contact are also transmission risks, as is "touching fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with monkeypox and that have not been disinfected, such as bedding, towels, fetish gear, and sex toys," the CDC says.

"What we're talking about here is close contact," Capt. Jennifer McQuiston, deputy director of the CDC's Division of High Consequence Pathogens and Pathology, said in a press briefing back in May. "It's not a situation where if you're passing someone in the grocery store, they're going to be at risk for monkeypox."

The potential for transmission through respiratory droplets has raised alarm and misinformation online. The route is thought to be associated with having lesions in the mouth or throat. But discussion of "respiratory droplets" has raised unpleasant memories of the early days of the pandemic, with some suggesting that monkeypox is similar to the respiratory pathogen SARS-CoV-2. To be clear, monkeypox is not like SARS-CoV-2. They are very different viruses.

Despite the semantics of "airborne" transmission, the monkeypox virus does not linger in the air, travel long distances, or transmit via air over short periods of time. In this outbreak so far, health officials are not documenting cases of people becoming infected by simply sharing airspace with someone.

This squares with what's been seen before. Over the years, a handful of travel-related cases have spurred health officials in the US and the UK to [closely monitor airline passengers](#) who were near an infected person. No cases have been identified this way. In the UK, for instance, seven travel-related cases were identified between 2018 and 2021. Of those cases, four were directly imported, two were household contacts, and one was a health care worker.

For now, the current outbreak is spreading primarily through the sexual networks of men who have sex with men (MSM), with transmission occurring during sexual encounters. The vast majority of people infected are men who identify as MSM.

Transmission unknowns

While sex appears to be the main route of transmission in this outbreak, monkeypox is not considered a traditional sexually transmitted infection. Still, it's largely acting like one and is often masquerading as common STIs. Whether monkeypox is spreading through semen, vaginal fluids, feces, or urine is still being investigated.

Another big transmission unknown is whether the virus is transmitting from people with little to no symptoms (asymptomatic spread). In the past, lesions brimming with virions were considered the main risk for transmission. Whether the virus can transmit before people develop or are aware of lesions is still unclear.

Who is at risk?

Though anyone can become infected with monkeypox, for now, those most at risk are MSM. Health experts have called for prevention measures and public health response efforts to focus on these communities.

"This transmission pattern represents both an opportunity to implement targeted public health interventions and a challenge because in some countries, the communities affected face life-threatening discrimination," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said prior to declaring the outbreak a PHEIC.

The spread among MSM has caused consternation among public health experts. Some have openly fretted about the potential to increase the stigma of MSM by highlighting the true transmission pattern in this outbreak. This has, in some instances, generalized the risk, leaving people at low risk to think they are at high risk—e.g., suggesting that the virus is "airborne." On the other side, though, [others have become frustrated](#) that the fear of stigma itself has become a hurdle to the response, preventing health officials from firmly adopting the necessary targeted approaches.

In recent weeks, officials have shifted and honed their messaging. The US CDC has a detailed guide on how MSM members can have [safer sex](#). And last week, WHO Director-General Tedros explicitly advised men who have sex with men to lower their risk by "reducing your number of sexual partners, reconsidering sex with new partners, and exchanging contact details with any new partners to enable follow-up if needed."

Though MSM are at the highest risk right now, everyone should take monkeypox seriously, health experts say. The longer it is able to spread, the more it will spread into new networks of people and potentially become entrenched in countries where the virus is not endemic. Some health experts have noted the potential for the virus to even spill back into animal populations in new countries, thus creating new animal reservoirs that could present a constant risk of transmission moving forward. The risk of this happening is considered very low, however. During a past outbreak in the US involving prairie dogs, for instance, no spread to other animals was noted. (There's more on that below.)

How to protect yourself

For members of the MSM community, the CDC has a detailed guide on [safer sex](#) to prevent continued spread in that community. Some health experts, like the WHO Director-General, have suggested that MSM limit the number of sexual partners and avoid anonymous encounters.

For those at risk, there are also two vaccine options, which are discussed in the next section.

In terms of general mitigation efforts, health officials recommend people avoid skin-to-skin contact with anyone who has a monkeypox-like rash. Do not touch such a rash or have close contact—cuddling, hugging, having sex—with someone who has monkeypox. Additionally, avoid contact with materials that an infected person has had a lot of contact with, such as eating utensils, bedding, towels, and clothes. Last, practice good hand hygiene, wash your hands frequently, and use alcohol-based hand sanitizers when out and about.

Monkeypox vaccines and treatments

Vaccines

Two vaccines are used to prevent monkeypox. One is an old-school smallpox vaccine called ACAM2000. This is a single-dose vaccine of a live replicating virus. It takes four weeks after the shot for a person to develop maximum immune protection. But given the replicating virus, it carries serious risks, including a risk of death in one to two cases out of a million doses administered. It is not recommended for people with compromised immune systems or other underlying conditions. As such, it is not the preferred vaccine in this outbreak.

The other, preferred option is the two-dose Jynneos vaccine, which is a live non-replicating virus vaccine that is specifically authorized by the Food and Drug Administration to prevent monkeypox in addition to smallpox. The two doses are administered 28 days apart, and it takes 14 days after the second shot for the vaccine to offer maximum protection.

The vaccine can also be used quickly after an exposure, though the post-exposure efficacy is also unknown. The CDC recommends that post-exposure vaccination occur within four days. After that point, the vaccine may only reduce symptoms, not prevent disease, the CDC warns.

Efficacy

Generally, the efficacy of these vaccines against monkeypox is not clear. Most of the data on the vaccines is based on smallpox work, animal studies, and observational data, not large, rigorous clinical trials. The CDC notes that some data from an observational study in Zaire in the 1980s suggested that prior smallpox vaccination was [85 percent effective at preventing monkeypox](#). But that study was not looking at people vaccinated with the Jynneos vaccine.

Equity

A bigger problem in this outbreak than the unknown efficacy, however, has been the limited supply of vaccines. Most importantly, vaccine doses are not available in countries in which the monkeypox virus is endemic in animal populations, presenting a stark inequity that has drawn biting criticism from members of the public health community. High-income countries do have access to vaccine supplies, but there is not enough to meet demand.

Dose-sparing

On Tuesday, August 9, the Food and Drug Administration announced that it was [authorizing a new way to administer the limited supply of Jynneos vaccines](#) to stretch out the doses for people ages 18 and up. Instead of administering the vaccine subcutaneously (into the tissue under the skin), one-fifth of a dose can be injected into the top layer of skin, causing a bubble. This intradermal injection could maximize immune responses while increasing supply up to five-fold.

“In recent weeks, the monkeypox virus has continued to spread at a rate that has made it clear our current vaccine supply will not meet the current demand,” FDA Commissioner Robert Califf said in a statement Tuesday. “The FDA quickly explored other scientifically appropriate options to facilitate access to the vaccine for all impacted individuals. By increasing the number of available doses, more individuals who want to be vaccinated against monkeypox will now have the opportunity to do so.”

So far in the outbreak, the US has only gotten 1.1 million doses in hand, which is not enough to vaccinate those at high risk, including certain members of the MSM community, contacts of infected people, and health care workers. In a press briefing on August 9, Dawn O’Connell, assistant secretary for Preparedness and Response for the Department of Health and Human Services, said that of the 441,000 doses yet to be administered, the new method would increase supply up to 2.2 million doses.

Outside experts applauded the dose-sparing effort, but the efficacy of this strategy is not known, and it may mean that people who are vaccinated now will need more shots in the future. Also, it’s unclear how quickly and smoothly the new administration method will roll out into vaccination clinics.

Treatments

For those who become sick with monkeypox, there are [a number of treatments available](#). Though many people will have self-limiting infections that don’t require specific treatments, people with severe infections or complications, those who have high-risk factors, children, and pregnant people may be candidates for specialized treatments.

These include:

- The antiviral Tecovirimat (also known as TPOXX, ST-246)
- The antiviral Cidofovir (also known as Vistide)
- The antiviral Brincidofovir (also known as CMX001 or Tembexa)
- Vaccinia Immune Globulin Intravenous (VIGIV), which has been used to treat complications from smallpox vaccination

For all of these treatments, there is no efficacy data against monkeypox specifically. And based on media reports, doctors have had trouble accessing some medications, most notably TPOXX.

What we know about past outbreaks

As noted above, the current outbreak is unusual in its size, its route of transmission (MSM sexual networks), and the way the disease is presenting. But it's not the only outbreak since the virus was discovered in Danish laboratory monkeys in 1958.

In 1964, epidemiologists documented [an outbreak at Rotterdam Zoo](#) in the Netherlands that began with the arrival of infected anteaters. The virus subsequently spread to orangutans, gorillas, monkeys, chimpanzees, a gibbon, and a marmoset, many of whom died.

The first outbreak of human cases outside of Africa occurred in the US in 2003. In this outbreak, infected rodents imported from Ghana were housed with [pet prairie dogs](#) that contracted the virus and then transmitted it to people. In all, health officials tallied 47 confirmed or suspected monkeypox cases in people from six states: Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. All of the infected people had direct contact with an infected prairie dog. There was no person-to-person transmission documented. Also, there was no evidence of other animals becoming infected.

In 2017, after decades without any monkeypox cases, Nigeria experienced an outbreak that is still ongoing. In the intervening years, a handful of travel-related monkeypox cases have spread from Nigeria to the US, UK, Singapore, and Israel.

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HEADLINE	08/13 How long to understand long Covid?
SOURCE	https://arstechnica.com/science/2022/08/how-long-will-it-take-to-understand-long-covid/
GIST	<p>Rachel Robles contracted COVID in March 2020. The 27-year-old data analyst has not gone a single day without symptoms since. Most doctors did not believe her when she described how she had gone from running the Brooklyn Half Marathon the previous year to enduring such crippling fatigue that her couch felt like quicksand. How she suddenly struggled to put numbers together, despite her technical training. How no matter how many breaths she took, she always felt starved for air.</p> <p>Three months in, one doctor told her, “COVID doesn’t last for 90 days. You either get over it or you die.” That dichotomy—in which the only possible outcomes of COVID are either complete recovery or death—has turned out to be anything but true. Between 8 million and 23 million Americans are still sick months or years after being infected. The perplexing array of symptoms known as long COVID has left an estimated 1 million of those people so disabled they are unable to work, and those numbers are likely to grow as the virus continues to evolve and spread. Some who escaped long COVID the first time are getting it after their second or third infection. “It is a huge public health crisis in the wake of acute COVID infection,” says Linda Geng, a physician and codirector of Stanford Health Care’s long COVID clinic.</p> <p>Though there is no longer debate that long COVID is a real phenomenon—both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization have recognized its existence—the science is so new that many questions remain about how to define the condition, what causes it and how to effectively treat it. It has become clear, for example, that long COVID can assume a variety of different forms. “Not everyone has the same disease,” which means there are different causes, says Akiko Iwasaki, an immunologist at the Yale School of Medicine.</p> <p>Scientists have proposed several different, yet interconnected, origin stories to explain these wide-ranging symptoms: The coronavirus could damage organs, spawn tiny blood clots, trigger autoimmunity, hide out in tissues or prompt new and ongoing symptoms in other, more subtle ways. To complicate matters further, these narratives are not mutually exclusive: Several could be occurring at the same time in a particular patient, or one could set off another in an unhappy sequence of events that keeps the patient in perpetual bad health. By teasing apart the theories one by one, researchers are gaining a greater understanding of this enigmatic illness and inching closer to therapies that don’t just mask symptoms but eliminate the root cause.</p>

Listening to patients

Many of the earliest insights into long COVID have been gleaned from the experiences shared by patients. A survey by the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, a team of long COVID patients who are doing research into their condition, [compiled a list](#) of more than 200 different symptoms across 10 organ systems. These range from the most common complaints like fatigue, cognitive impairment, shortness of breath, irregular menstrual periods, headaches, heart palpitations, sleep problems, and anxiety and depression, to other afflictions like double vision, peeling skin, hair loss, tinnitus, tremors, food allergies, and sexual dysfunction. The constellation of reported symptoms can vary from person to person, even changing over the course of the condition.

Because there is no agreed-upon definition of long COVID, no simple diagnostic test, and no way to clearly distinguish one subtype from another, the various manifestations of this mysterious condition often get lumped under one big umbrella, confounding researchers. Yet emerging research is providing the first evidence for several promising hypotheses.

One theory blames the illness on lingering organ or tissue injury caused by the initial infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus behind COVID-19. Though the coronavirus enters the body through the respiratory tract, it can travel through the bloodstream to infect the [kidneys](#), heart, [nervous system](#), and [gut](#). In the process, it can set off [waves of inflammation](#) that reverberate throughout the body, causing collateral damage to multiple organs.

In one study, researchers at the University of Oxford compared brain scans of people before and after they got COVID and found that even mild cases can cause the [brain to shrink](#) by 0.2 to 2 percent more than in people who had not been infected. Because adults typically lose about [0.2 percent](#) of their brain volume in regions related to memory every year, that translates to mental decline equivalent to 1 to 10 years of aging. It's too soon to know if this effect is temporary or might set up people for age-related disorders later in life.

When Heather-Elizabeth Brown, a 37-year-old in Detroit, got COVID in April 2020, it hit her so hard she spent 120 days in the hospital, many of them on a ventilator in a medically induced coma. The disease battered her veins and arteries, spawning blood clots and a stroke. It [scarred her lungs](#), making it harder to breathe. It also damaged her [heart](#), causing abnormal heart rhythms and high blood pressure. The assault on multiple organ systems left her with diabetes, [brain fog](#), and chronic pain. "I am not sure anyone has been able to assess the degree of damage," she says.

Many experts believe the persistent health issues following a severe case of COVID are a distinct entity from the assortment of symptoms arising after an asymptomatic or mild infection with the virus, though both may be considered long COVID. "I think the clearest line in the sand is people who were hospitalized versus people who were not hospitalized," says David Putrino, a director of rehabilitation innovation for the Mount Sinai Health System, whose team has treated thousands of long COVID patients. People like Brown who experience organ damage after hospitalization, Putrino says, often benefit from physical rehabilitation, whereas others with long Covid can get worse when they exert themselves. "Understanding all of the different subtypes of long Covid becomes really important here."

The majority of long COVID patients—more than 75 percent, according to [some estimates](#)—were never hospitalized for their original infection. For these people, uncovering the reasons for their enduring illness is less straightforward, though scientists have several leads.

Tiny blood clots, lingering damage

Resia Pretorius, a physiologist at Stellenbosch University in South Africa, believes that most long COVID symptoms can be traced back to [microscopic blood clots](#) that block tiny vessels and prevent oxygen from reaching the body's tissues. Recent studies show that these microclots are triggered by the [spike proteins](#) dotting the surface of the coronavirus, which can mimic proteins involved in normal blood clotting.

Pretorius, who has been analyzing blood plasma samples of COVID patients since the beginning of the pandemic, discovered that in long COVID patients, the microclots that form during acute Covid infection don't [break down](#) the way they should. Proteins that prevent the clearance of clots remain trapped inside these insoluble, meshlike clumps of blood, along with inflammatory molecules that might have signaled something was amiss if they had been in the bloodstream. This could be one reason "why the individuals are so very, very sick but their typical laboratory results come back within normal ranges," Pretorius says.

Some researchers are testing experimental treatments to eliminate these microclots. In Mulheim, Germany, physician Beate Jaeger is adapting a controversial approach called [HELP apheresis](#), previously used to filter bad cholesterol from the blood of patients with coronary heart disease. In the UK, cardiologist Amitava Banerjee of University College London is [leading a clinical trial](#) comparing the effectiveness of antihistamines, an anticlotting drug and an anti-inflammatory medication.

And in South Africa, Pretorius's laboratory [reported that a "triple therapy"](#)—two antiplatelet treatments and one anticoagulant—restored 24 long-haulers to pre-pandemic health. That study was small and lacked controls, though. She worries that by the time solid evidence arrives for her hypothesis, it could be too late for some patients to benefit. "We need to find treatments for these individuals soon," she says, "so that we don't end up removing the microclots but still having patients that are not well because of the damage that is now irreversible."

The body battling itself

Others posit that long COVID might arise when the body's overzealous [response to infection](#) knocks the immune response off-kilter, inducing autoimmune disease. To neutralize the threat of a foreign pathogen, the immune system can produce [billions](#) of antibodies against various viral or bacterial proteins, some of which may look like human proteins. Known as autoantibodies, they can turn the body against itself.

"It is very difficult to shut them down once they are triggered because the stimulus that is triggering them is everywhere—it is essentially your own cells," says Iwasaki. She and her colleague immunobiologist Aaron Ring found that COVID can amplify the [production of autoantibodies](#), and others have shown these can [persist for months](#) after infection. Iwasaki believes that this link between the immune system and long COVID could explain why the illness primarily affects middle-aged women, who are the most vulnerable to autoimmune disorders.

The relationship is complicated: Infections can prompt autoimmunity, and preexisting autoimmunity can predispose a person to more serious infections or more persistent symptoms, which can lead to the accumulation of health issues over a lifetime. Sherri Klipowicz, a 36-year-old in Evergreen, Colorado, spent 14 years trying to get someone to pay attention to the new symptoms that appeared after a tick-borne illness. "Everything changed with my health after Lyme disease," she says. "It is like the extinction line that you can see from the dinosaurs: dinosaur bones/no bones because of the asteroid." When she got COVID in March 2020, her body experienced another seismic shift: Seizures, blurry vision, brain fog and fatigue became part of her reality.

For once, Klipowicz was grateful for her previous health struggles because she knew how to navigate the health care system and was undeterred when doctors said they had no idea what was going on. In April 2022, she received a diagnosis of [mast cell activation syndrome](#) (MCAS), a disorder that [has been linked](#) to long COVID.

[A small study](#) in Massachusetts during the first wave of the pandemic suggested that two common MCAS medications could prevent or treat certain aspects of long COVID. Klipowicz's own MCAS treatment regimen has reduced the brain fog and dampened her other symptoms. But she has come to accept that her health may never return to what it once was. "There is no neat narrative of, I was sick and now I'm better," she says.

Rousting hidden viral remnants

Some long COVID patients may continue to experience symptoms long after their initial infection because they still harbor the coronavirus, in some form, somewhere in their bodies. Amy Proal, a microbiologist at

the PolyBio Research Foundation, a research nonprofit focused on infection-associated chronic disease, [notes that other viruses and viral remnants](#) have been known to [persist in patient tissues](#): influenza in tonsils, enteroviruses in the stomach, Zika in semen, Ebola in breast milk. Recent research indicates that the new coronavirus also has the propensity to stick around.

For example, a study by Saurabh Mehandru, a gastroenterologist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York, detected RNA and protein of SARS-CoV-2 in [gut biopsies](#) of people who had COVID four months earlier. Similar research has discovered bits of the coronavirus in [body fat](#) and even the [brain](#). Because those studies looked for genetic material or protein rather than the entire virus, it is unclear if the virus traces identified in tissues are fully functional or shadows of their former selves. Still, even remnants of the virus could put the immune system on high alert, prompting chronic inflammation.

If this theory holds true, then vaccines or antivirals could ease long COVID symptoms by helping the body get rid of lingering virus. A survey of 26,000 people with long COVID by the biotech company 23andMe found that [about 20 percent](#) of respondents reported feeling somewhat better after receiving the COVID vaccine. Lisa McCorkell, co-founder of the Patient-Led Research Collaborative, says her long COVID symptoms—among them heart palpitations, dizziness, brain fog, and fatigue—lessened after she got her shot. Though her illness persisted, she found she could push the envelope a little, taking a few more steps for exercise or logging a few more hours of work, without crashing. “My triggering point is much higher.”

Similar stories have emerged of long COVID symptoms dissipating after a five-day course of Pfizer’s antiviral drug Paxlovid. Stanford’s Geng recently posted a [case report](#) describing a 47-year-old long COVID patient whom she treated with the drug after a possible reinfection. Not only did the patient’s illness resolve quickly, but her long COVID symptoms also went away.

But Geng cautions that people should not read too much into a single case. “It is anecdotal and should not be taken as conclusive evidence for this model,” she says. Case reports, she adds, are merely observations that raise questions to be answered in well-designed studies. Geng is unaware of any clinical studies underway to test Paxlovid for long COVID.

One infection begets others

Even if the immune system successfully clears a COVID infection, the stress of doing so could allow dormant viruses that were previously held in check to reemerge and create new health issues. Anyone who has had shingles, for example, has experienced a reactivation of [varicella-zoster](#), the virus that causes chickenpox. People can accumulate [many](#) persistent viruses over the course of a lifetime, according to Proal, and reactivation of one of these during a COVID infection may explain at least some long COVID symptoms.

Some [evidence suggests](#) that prior infection with Epstein-Barr virus (EBV), which causes mononucleosis, puts people at higher risk for developing long COVID. The reactivation of dormant EBV has been [linked to myalgic encephalomyelitis / chronic fatigue syndrome \(ME/CFS\)](#), an illness with striking similarities to long COVID.

Michael VanElzakker, a neuroscientist at Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital, has [hypothesized](#) that viruses may cause ME/CFS and long COVID by triggering a malfunction in the almighty vagus nerve. This bundle of nerve fibers induces the “sickness response,” signaling the body to rest when it senses an infection somewhere in the body. VanElzakker contends that when the infection is located on the vagus nerve itself, this response is exaggerated, causing many of the debilitating symptoms seen in both conditions.

Nearly a year after developing long COVID, Robles, the twentysomething Brooklynite, was diagnosed with [reactivated EBV](#) and human herpesvirus 6 (HHV-6). She started Famciclovir, an antiviral for herpesvirus infections, and within five days her difficulty breathing had dramatically improved. Though several issues remained, Robles says the treatment got her to the point where she felt like her body “wasn’t constantly fighting to breathe.”

Eager to know whether her remaining symptoms were driven by active EBV or another mechanism entirely, Robles recently volunteered to undergo an endoscopy and colonoscopy so that her gastroenterologist, Mount Sinai's Mehandru, could take gut biopsies and check them for signs of autoimmunity or bits of SARS-CoV-2. Mehandru warned her that they might not find anything. Yet Robles feels hopeful that by submitting pieces of herself to science, she will learn something more. "I feel like the closer I get to things, the more answers I'm getting," she says.

Money, time, and trials

For now, given the state of the science, treatment for long COVID amounts to a painstaking process of trial and error. Many patients, physicians and researchers are frustrated that there hasn't been more progress. The NIH, which launched its \$1.2 billion "RECOVER" initiative to research the long-term effects of COVID [in early 2021](#), has drawn criticism for a lack of urgency and its focus on gathering observations rather than testing interventions. In March 2022, Iwasaki, Putrino and other experts coauthored a [policy briefing](#) that blasted the effort as "achingly slow" and noted, among other things, that just 8 of 200 long COVID trials listed on the ClinicalTrials.gov database at the time of the report's publication were funded by the NIH. "I get frustrated by the fact that we always just sort of throw our hands in the air and say, 'Well, good science takes time.' It's not true," Putrino says.

But the search for solutions may finally be gaining momentum. Stuart Katz, a cardiologist at NYU Langone Health and co-lead of the clinical science core for RECOVER, says that as of July 25, the initiative's observational study had recruited 6,248 adults, 35 percent of its adult enrollment target. "We have really worked very hard to push it as fast as we could," says Katz, who himself suffered from long Covid for about a year. The study will examine electronic health records as well as survey results, clinical tests, biological specimens and even autopsies in search of clues for what causes long COVID.

"No other study anywhere in the world is doing what RECOVER is doing in terms of this deep look and longitudinal follow-up into people who are exposed to SARS-CoV-2," says Katz, who anticipates seeing the first batch of data from the initiative in mid-August. "We are still hopeful that this more rigorous approach will give us answers."

For example, Katz hopes to identify clusters of symptoms that might define subtypes of long COVID, enabling researchers to design smarter studies that test therapies only in those patients most likely to benefit.

In May, the NIH announced a [big push](#) to fund clinical trials on new treatments, the first of which should begin by the end of 2022. And the Patient-Led Research Collaborative recently received [\\$3 million](#) from other sources to pursue five long COVID projects, including creating a list of hypotheses, based on patient experiences, for researchers to pursue.

"Long COVID research has come at a pace that is faster than many other, if not all, diseases in previous history. That doesn't mean that it's an acceptable pace," says the collaborative's McCorkell. "It's a very hopeful time, but there's still so much more that can be done."

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HEADLINE	08/12 Seattle PD unveils 'BTB' training program
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/seattle-police-department-unveils-training-program-to-foster-community-understanding
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — The public on Friday got its first look at a new training program aimed at giving recruits for the Seattle Police Department a better understanding about the community they will end up serving once they hit the beat.</p> <p>Called Before the Badge, the initiative started in May.</p> <p>Victoria Beach, of the African-American Community Advisory Council to SPD, is one of several people working with the new training program given to those trying to join Seattle police.</p>

"It shows that our police department is trying," she said.

The department released videos and information about the effort on Friday.

"Before SPD's new recruits attend the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission for their mandatory 720-hour Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) training they will first attend Before the Badge (BTB). This training, launched in May 2022, immerses all SPD recruits in community-based, peer-based, and introspective experiences that will provide them both a lens through which to receive their eventual BLEA training and a foundation upon which to build their careers as Seattle Police Officers. During Before the Badge, SPD recruits will gain a more comprehensive understanding of the people they will eventually swear to serve and protect. Because of BTB, recruits will first build relationships with the people of Seattle – before they receive their badges."

"There really isn't a segment that is focused on how to build relationships," Interim Police Chief Adrian Diaz says in one of the videos. "We wanted to do that at the very beginning of their training."

The program was an idea by Diaz.

"As far as we know there is no other police department in the country – or even the world – requiring this kind of pre-academy community-based training."

Beach said she has been part of an intensive question-and-answer session with recruits.

She said she has been able to share what it is really like in the community.

"My part also is sharing my stories of the terrible interactions myself and my family have had, and it's pretty deep and heavy," Beach said. "Some of them come up to me afterwards and they're just shocked. I don't hold back because I want to help build a bigger and better police department."

"They want to make the difference," Beach said of the recruits she has spoken to. "Some people might say, 'Oh they're just saying that.' No, you can't fool me, because I'm pretty tough on them. I'm excited about it but I wish the groups we met with were like 30 (or) 40 officers."

There lies the challenge.

So far SPD said three recruits have completed the program, with nine more currently enrolled..

Police officials said the program is only offered so far to recruits and Community Service officers.

Police said there has been talk of including current officers, but for now it is not possible due to current staffing levels because they are needed for emergency responses and investigations.

Recent numbers from SPD show that from January to June of this year:

- 30 police officers were hired;
- 109 left the department.
- The number of officers in service in that same timeframe fell to 956.
- At the beginning of 2020, that number was at 1,290.

"We're having a very difficult time recruiting people to take this job," Mike Solan of the Seattle Police Officers Guild said. "You got to do the math here and you have to get back to reality and the reality is supporting your current people."

Solan said this new program for recruits is important, but so is officer retention.

	<p>He added that an agreement to ongoing union talks between the city and the police union would help in the necessary retention of current police officers.</p> <p>"We have 350 current people that are eligible to retire," Solan said. "I don't know how we absorb even losing 10 more people."</p> <p>Sean Goode, of Choose 180, a King County-based organization that works to help youth in the community, said his group has been in discussion with officials on the program and if needed, would be willing to help.</p> <p>While Goode appreciates the mission of the training, he did share some worries.</p> <p>"Much of what these recruits are learning, are also new news to the folks who have been serving there historically," he said. "One of the concerns I do carry is that you can coach up and train up and support the new folks that are coming in and make sure they're very well acquainted, and if they engage in a space where the culture doesn't embrace these alternative measures, or doesn't have the familiarity of them, will it be sustainable?"</p> <p>Police officials have provided a list to KOMO of the community organizations and individuals that are involved in the training. They said this list is subject to change as more sign on to participate: Duwamish Tribe, Victoria Beach, the Rev Walden, the Rev Drake, IF Project and WELD-The Collective, SE Asian Advisory Council, E African Advisory Council, African-American Advisory Council, Filipino Advisory Council and the Middle Eastern Advisory Council.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Growing trash, tents Interurban Trail
SOURCE	https://www.kiro7.com/news/local/growing-trash-tents-interurban-trail-causing-concerns/ALZU5D6WYZECPJYR3XZRPBZI74/
GIST	<p>A trail stretching from Seattle to Everett normally provides miles of solitude for walkers, joggers and bicyclists, but people are now saying the Interurban Trail is being filled with trash and tents.</p> <p>People KIRO 7 talked with in the Bitter Lake area said every time they come to the trail, they see new tents, with some taking up a significant amount of space.</p> <p>"I would say that people have definitely changed their walking patterns along here," Sheila Larussa said.</p> <p>"Well, I walk this trail three or four times every week, and you know over the last year especially, it's gone from just a nice, pretty green natural area to filth and trash and now there's vehicles, people are building structures out of pallets, somebody built a garage, they've got a truck down there," Michael Stevenson said.</p> <p>"I've been emailing the city about it. It's definitely gotten worse. It started with one tent and, you know, grew exponentially. I go actually into the cemetery and I see more people walking in there. You know people like my mom who lives close by, she would come down here because she doesn't have to worry about traffic. She doesn't come down here anymore and, you know, that's very sad," said Sheila LaRussa.</p> <p>La Russa isn't the only person who has reached out to the city. KIRO 7's Briseida Holguin talked with several others who have done the same.</p> <p>Holguin also reached out to Seattle City Light, which has utility poles along the trail. It said it was aware of the situation but also said, "City Light lacks jurisdiction over the Interurban Trail and cannot unilaterally remove people and their belongings. We are working with the City's Unified Care team and our City partners to address the community's concerns."</p> <p>Neighbors feel like their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.</p>

	“I don’t think this should be a place where people are living. You know it would be one thing if it were not as trashy and built up as it is, but it’s just really gotten worse over the last year,” Stevenson said.
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HEADLINE	08/12 Back-to-school: Covid variants, monkeypox
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/back-to-school-covid19-monkeypox-outbreak/507-e41be757-ce79-43c3-a408-93fcab9fa1d5
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Some schools and college campuses across the country are already welcoming students back, while others are soaking up their last weeks of summer vacation.</p> <p>But back-to-school looks different this year for many parents with the latest COVID-19 variants and the spread of monkeypox at the top of their minds.</p> <p>Here's what you need to know about the two ongoing outbreaks as classes begin and how much of a threat the viruses pose to students.</p> <p>COVID-19 variants and schools</p> <p>The latest surge in COVID-19 cases is tied to a string of new variants that arose this summer. But as the CDC eases its guidelines on COVID-19, many schools are returning closer to a pre-pandemic normal.</p> <p>The health agency on Thursday dropped the requirement for a quarantine if exposed to COVID-19, but still recommends those who test positive to isolate from others for at least five days, regardless of whether they're vaccinated.</p> <p>School districts across the U.S. have scaled back their COVID-19 precautions in recent weeks, even before the latest CDC guidance was issued.</p> <p>For those testing with at-home COVID tests, the FDA now recommends taking three tests in order to avoid a false negative.</p> <p>Consistent testing is the best way to confirm whether your symptoms are truly COVID-19, according to TEGNA medical expert Dr. Payal Kohli. The subvariants responsible for the latest surge, BA.5 and BA.4, pose a different threat as it also has higher rates of reinfection.</p> <p>"Even if you've had infection recently, with omicron, or you've had what we call hybrid immunity, which is infection plus vaccination, which was thought to be the highest level of protection, we are seeing a higher rate of reinfection occurring even in those individuals," she said.</p> <p>Masks continue to be recommended only in areas where community transmission is deemed high, or if a person is considered at high risk of severe illness.</p> <p>Masks will be optional in most school districts when classes resume this fall, and some of the nation’s largest districts have dialed back or eliminated COVID-19 testing requirements.</p> <p>Kohli said as the fall semester begins, the BA. 2.75 variant could be the next COVID-19 wave. The BA. 2.75 variant rapidly spread in India and popped up in many other countries, including the U.S. Similarly to the BA.5 and BA.4 variants, it spreads rapidly and has been shown to get around vaccine immunities and previous infection protection.</p> <p>Can children get monkeypox?</p> <p>While there has only been a very small handful of cases of children getting monkeypox during this current outbreak, it is possible for kids to contract the virus.</p>

"I think going back to school, in my mind, BA. 5, the flu, other colds and infections, those are certainly bigger concerns than the monkeypox virus," Kohli said.

Although kids who get monkeypox are at a higher risk for serious illness, the virus hasn't been spreading much amongst children. As of mid-August, there have only been five reported cases of children in the U.S. who have tested positive for monkeypox.

Earlier this month, health officials in Illinois said [a daycare worker had been infected with monkeypox](#) and potentially exposed dozens of children at the daycare. Officials from the Illinois Department of Public Health said children and other co-workers were being screened for monkeypox, the Associated Press reported.

"We hope there are no kid cases," said Julie Pryde, director of the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District. "But for all we know, the employee could have gotten it from a kid."

How is monkeypox spread?

Monkeypox, which is a cousin of smallpox, typically [spreads through direct contact of infected rashes, scabs or bodily fluids](#). However, it can spread after prolonged face-to-face contact or during intimate contact such [as kissing, cuddling or sex](#).

The blister-like rashes are infectious, especially if they are shedding.

Touching clothes or linens previously touched by someone with monkeypox is another possible form of transmission. The virus can spread as soon as symptoms start and until the blister-like rashes are fully healed.

Monkeypox also poses a threat to pregnant woman as the virus can spread through their placentas.

"It's not a casual respiratory virus that you can just sort of catch by walking past somebody or anything like that, it really does require close contact with the person who's actively infected," Kohli said.

How do I avoid getting monkeypox?

Monkeypox raises new areas of concern in terms of spread, such as being conscious of linens and surfaces previously touched by someone with monkeypox.

For those still traveling during the last few days of summer vacation, be sure to stay in places where sheets and towels are being washed and laundered. Sharing cups and utensils can also spread the virus.

"If you go to an Airbnb, or you go to a hotel, and it's not entirely clear who was staying there before, whether or not the laundry was done, these are all precautions we need to take with this infection that we didn't have to think about nearly as much with COVID-19 and others," Dr. Kohli suggested.

Like with any other virus, washing hands is a must in preventing the spread.

Avoiding prolonged contact such as cuddling, kissing and intercourse is also suggested by the CDC to prevent getting infected.

College campuses and outbreaks

College campuses are no stranger to outbreaks, having dealt with the omicron and delta variants within the last school year. The monkeypox outbreak is a lower threat to smaller children, but for teenagers and college students it's key to know how the virus spreads.

"It is really important for parents to educate their children about how this virus is transmitted, so that they can minimize the chance of outbreaks occurring on campuses," Dr. Kohli said.

	<p>As college and grad students return to dorms and college campuses, they should minimize their sexual partners while cases are still on the rise. It's also important for students to know what a monkeypox rash looks like since many are living in close quarters with each other, Kohli said.</p> <p>"This fall is going to be very different from last year for our college kids, because now we're dealing with two different outbreaks happening at the same time," Kohli said. "We still have high levels of BA,5, we potentially might even get the 2.75, which is a more contagious variant of omicron coming and then of course, we have the monkeypox that we're dealing with as well."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Hospitals long-term care problems
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/long-term-care-availability-crowding-hospitals/281-a987d2b7-f5a3-494e-b7c9-464ab8f6d1df
GIST	<p>SEATTLE — Harborview Medical Center reported Thursday it will temporarily accept only patients that are in urgent need of their specialized care.</p> <p>The hospital said it had 560 patients in a hospital set up for 413, and that 100 of those patients are medically stable and in need of long-term, post-acute care, but have not yet been able to be transferred.</p> <p>Hospitals statewide warned about this problem in July. Hospital leaders said it persists today.</p> <p>Hospitals provide acute care - treatment for an emergent need such as a heart attack. Other facilities provide post-acute care, such as rehabilitation, or services such as memory care.</p> <p>The Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) said many patients are waiting in hospitals to try to get that care, but face major delays.</p> <p>"It's really, really challenging to find a placement in a nursing home or an adult family home right now and there's several reasons for that," WSHA CEO Cassie Sauer said. "One is that nursing homes just aren't paid enough to take care of really complex patients and, especially with the wage pressures we're experiencing from our really tight employment economy right now, it's really hard to hire people to work there."</p> <p>LeadingAge Washington, which advocates for not-for-profit and mission-driven senior care and housing organizations, said current Medicaid rates make it difficult for long-term care providers to pay direct care workers livable wages.</p> <p>"Our [certified nursing assistants] in both assisted living and skilled nursing facilities' average pay has been between \$16-\$18 per hour, some of the lowest wages in health care," a spokesperson wrote. "Our direct care workers hold some of the most important jobs in healthcare, taking care of our state's older adults, and their value needs to be reflected in their pay and how we perceive this profession, and we will not rebuild our workforce until those issues are addressed."</p> <p>The group said hospitals have always been one of their largest sources for patient referrals for long-term care and it is their mission to provide care and services for older adults who need placement and no longer need to be in hospitals, but the current workforce shortage is inhibiting them from admitting more patients.</p> <p>"Some national studies have Washington as one of the top states for staffing shortages, with an estimated turnover of almost 40% for some positions, leaving long-term care providers unable to safely meet the needs of patients needing to be discharged from the hospital," a spokesperson wrote. "Our staffing shortage started long before COVID due to chronic Medicaid underfunding but has gotten exponentially worse during this pandemic because staff are exhausted, retiring, and finding employment elsewhere, and we are losing competent and caring staff."</p> <p>WSHA also has concerns surrounding the state's interpretation of guardianship laws, and the time it takes for a loved one to get the ability to make decisions about long-term care in a case where a patient is not in</p>

	<p>a position to decide on their own. WSHA said some of its hospitals have reported that these issues make transfers take longer even when a bed is available.</p> <p>"This is an issue that should worry every Washingtonian right now," Sauer said. "If we can't get people out of hospitals, if you need a hospital bed, you may not be able to get one."</p> <p>WSHA is advocating for increased funding for long-term care facilities and reinterpretation of or new legislation surrounding guardianship laws.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Governor Jay Inslee's office said agencies are continuing to work with hospitals and are in regular communication with them -- Harborview in particular -- to try and find community placement.</p> <p>The office outlined some of its strategies in a letter to WSHA.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Gov. directive monkeypox virus response
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/health/monkeypox/governor-inslee-directive-monkeypox-virus-response/281-62ad36d0-1414-4124-bba4-17ec4cf0dc93
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Governor Jay Inslee issued a directive to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) Friday, outlining additional steps to address the rise in monkeypox (MPV) cases.</p> <p>In his directive to state health officials, Inslee said MPV is an "evolving serious public health concern."</p> <p>The Centers for Disease Control confirmed the first U.S. case of MPV on May 17. As of Aug. 11, there are 10,768 cases of MPV across the United States.</p> <p>There are 265 confirmed MPV cases in Washington state as of Friday, according to the DOH. King County reported 225 cases in the latest update, an increase of nearly 100 cases since the state's Aug. 3 update.</p> <p>Other cases were reported in Whatcom, Spokane, Snohomish, Pierce, Lewis, Yakima, Benton, Cowlitz, Clark, Mason and Kitsap counties.</p> <p>Inslee said there have been no known deaths due to MPV in Washington state.</p> <p>The latest directive asked the DOH to make the following priorities in response to MPV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct comprehensive public outreach and education within appropriate communities and communities disproportionately impacted by the virus, working with and through trusted partners • Emphasize building relationships and engaging in outreach efforts to reach those individuals most at risk • Prioritize equitable distribution of existing treatments, including the limited supply of approved vaccine • Support provider education to ensure MPV vaccine is maximized to its fullest extent • Monitor case counts and demographic data • Convene a series of roundtables with key stakeholders and legislators to enhance communications and education related to MPV • Work with and support local health jurisdictions statewide as they manage MPV in their communities • Maintain adequate testing capacity at the Department's Public Health Lab and address identified reporting gaps • Exercise available statutory authority to take appropriate disease control measures. Furthermore, it is my expectation that the Department will keep me informed of any developments as this public health concern evolves. Other state agencies stand ready to assist the Department, as needed, to provide a coordinated and swift response.

As more cases were confirmed, the DOH activated its MPV readiness team May 25. State officials launched a MPV response team on July 22.

Inslee said there is a limited supply of MPV vaccines available in the United States.

DOH requested 96% of the vaccine doses allocated to the state by the federal government, leaving the other 4% for when it identifies more counties or Tribal communities that may need assistance.

The MPV vaccine is a two-dose series. Health officials are prioritizing getting the first doses out quickly. [Public Health - Seattle & King County](#) held its [first free community MPV vaccination event](#) on Aug. 6. A long line wrapped around Seattle Central College for the event.

County health officials received more than 4,000 doses last week, but the agency needs enough to vaccinate approximately 40,000 people. Its top priorities are getting more vaccines and meeting people where they are by holding weekend clinics.

Public health officials said if you need a vaccine, check with your provider or Harborview Sexual Health Clinic, which will be receiving more doses soon.

Inslee said in his directive that there are antiviral medications available to treat people with severe diseases and people at risk for severe diseases.

The MPV virus can spread through contact with an infectious rash, scabs or bodily fluid, prolonged respiratory face-to-face contact, or potentially from objects or clothing used by someone with the illness.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Tacoma faces revenue shortfall
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/article264428701.html
GIST	<p>Tacoma's budget is "structurally imbalanced," creating a difficult budget season ahead, according to the city's budget officer.</p> <p>Tacoma has a deficit of \$23.7 million, and the recurring revenues the city expects to receive year-over-year are not covering its expenses, budget officer Katie Johnston said in an interview Monday. The deficit equates to about 4% of the city's projected expenses.</p> <p>Council will receive an update on the revenue forecast next month and a proposal of the biennium budget on Oct. 4.</p> <p>The city is challenged by inflation that is at a 40-year high, one-time federal funding that helped address issues — like the housing crisis — is drying up, the risk of a recession and continued pressures on city services.</p> <p>The city receives revenue in its general fund through four major taxes. Sales and business taxes, which bring in about \$146 million and \$115 million respectively, grow with economic activity in the city and decrease during periods of economic downturn. Johnston said necessary and desired services increase during economic downturns, but revenues to pay for those services decrease in downturns. Property taxes and utility taxes are capped on how much they can grow.</p> <p>The city also has a sales tax that raises money for a dedicated fund for affordable housing that brings in almost \$14 million dollars in the biennium, and for mental health and chemical dependency that totals almost \$14 million as well.</p> <p>Over the last 10 years, the city's residential population has grown by 10%, Johnston said.</p>

“If our revenues can barely keep up with our existing service, then we don’t really have the ability to expand our services to deal with that growth in our population,” Johnston said.

The city has a baseline budget that has the current ongoing services that projects costs and revenues. In this year’s biennium budget proposal, the office has included the costs of repairing and replacing city facilities, instead of deferred maintenance, which can lead to bigger expenditures in the future.

For items like housing that are top concerns but have a high price tag, city manager Elizabeth Pauli said departments can use their strategic plans to continue making smaller advancements without needing to take as big of a bite.

She said during every budget process, city departments evaluate their programs to see if they are performing as needed and look to shift expenses or go after grants.

Tacoma still has about half, \$30.5 million, of the American Rescue Plan Act money it received, which will be used over the course of four to six years. It invested in affordable housing and homelessness. Johnston said the problem with one-time funding is a lot of housing needs have long-term costs associated with them.

“We have to be really thoughtful about how we’re spending these resources and doing so so we don’t set up permanent supportive housing locations if we don’t have the dollars to ultimately help offset some of their operating costs in the long run,” Johnston said. “That’s been a balance for our City Council and city manager to think about. how do we use these dollars to address urgent emergent needs in our community that don’t create unsustainable commitments in the long run?”

Johnston said the budget office ensures there is some flexibility in the financial planning process. She said it is difficult to look across many different service areas and try to weigh: “Are we going to be moving far enough in this service delivery area in the next two years or should we put more resources into this other area?”

One example is the Tacoma Police Department’s violent crime reduction plan. The second and third phases have a budget component across different departments, not just Tacoma Police Department. In order to decrease crime, the police department will look to partners to help, like code enforcement and public works. Pauli said some programs might already exist that will help to deter crime. She said the city has reserves that can help pay for the two phases. Those departments can also look at putting programs on hold.

“All of those options are going to be available,” she said.

The budget office staff continuously does outreach through engaging City Council members on their strategic priorities and surveying the community. The city also is hosting a virtual Balancing Act workshop at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, an online tool that allows Tacomans to play with budget scenarios by making increases or decreases to service levels as they try to balance the city’s general fund budget.

Pauli said Balancing Act can add context and understanding to the city’s budget; like your own budget, income comes in and expenses go out.

Using the Balancing Act tool is also another way to engage in the budget process, Johnston said.

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Cyber, Tech Awareness

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HEADLINE
08/14 Treasury sanctions Tornado Cash

SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/compliance/us-treasury-sanctions-tornado-cash-for-money-laundering-for-hacking-groups
GIST	<p>Since before its inception, Argus-eyed payments experts have expressed concern that cryptocurrencies, lacking a distinct audit trail, would be used for funneling illegally obtained funds or other criminal uses.</p> <p>With the latest federal action against Tornado Cash, that fear would seem to be realized.</p> <p>Earlier this week, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) sanctioned Tornado Cash for money laundering, citing that the so-called "virtual currency mixer" has been utilized to launder more than \$7 billion in virtual currency since its launch in 2019. This money-laundering activity includes over \$455 million stolen by the Lazarus Group, a Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) state-sponsored hacking group that was sanctioned by the U.S. in 2019, in the largest known virtual currency heist to date, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.</p> <p>"Today, Treasury is sanctioning Tornado Cash, a virtual currency mixer that launders the proceeds of cybercrimes, including those committed against victims in the United States," said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson in a prepared release.</p> <p>"Despite public assurances otherwise, Tornado Cash has repeatedly failed to impose effective controls designed to stop it from laundering funds for malicious cyber actors on a regular basis and without basic measures to address its risks," he added. "Treasury will continue to aggressively pursue actions against mixers that launder virtual currency for criminals and those who assist them."</p> <p>Additionally, Tornado Cash was used by criminal groups to "clean" more than \$96 million of malicious cyber actors' funds derived from the June 24 Harmony Bridge Heist, and at least \$7.8 million from the Aug. 2 Nomad Heist.</p> <p>According to its public release, the U.S. Treasury Department "has worked to expose components of the virtual currency ecosystem, like Tornado Cash and Blender.io, that cybercriminals use to obfuscate the proceeds from illicit cyber activity and other crimes."</p> <p>"While most virtual currency activity is licit, it can be used for illicit activity, including sanctions evasion through mixers, peer-to-peer exchangers, darknet markets, and exchanges," the Treasury release said. "This includes the facilitation of heists, ransomware schemes, fraud, and other cybercrimes."</p> <p>Similarly, U.S. Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) assessed a \$60 million civil money penalty in 2020 against the owner and operator of another virtual currency mixer for violations of the Bank Secrecy Act (BSA) and its implementing regulations. Tornado Cash, by its public description, operates on the Ethereum blockchain and indiscriminately facilitates anonymous transactions by "obfuscating their origin, destination, and counterparties, with no attempt to determine their origin."</p> <p>"Tornado receives a variety of transactions and mixes them together before transmitting them to their individual recipients," according to the U.S. Treasury release. "While the purported purpose is to increase privacy, mixers like Tornado are commonly used by illicit actors to launder funds, especially those stolen during significant heists."</p>
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HEADLINE	08/15 Critical infrastructure at risk: exposed VNC
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/critical-infrastructure-vnc/
GIST	<p>Security researchers have warned that countless global organizations might be at risk of remote compromise after discovering more than 8000 exposed Virtual Network Computing (VNC) instances.</p> <p>A team at security vendor Cyble said it found the instances were managed by critical infrastructure (CNI) organizations such as water treatment plants, manufacturing plants and research facilities.</p>

VNC is a cross-platform screen-sharing system which allows users to remotely control another computer. However, with authentication disabled as per the 8000 VNC instances discovered by Cyble, malicious actors could potentially hijack these endpoints and the industrial control systems they're often connected to.

"During the course of the investigation, researchers were able to narrow down multiple Human Machine Interface (HMI) systems, Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems, workstations, etc., connected via VNC and exposed over the internet," the firm said.

"Malicious hackers can utilize online search engines to narrow down victim organizations with exposed VNCs. They can also abruptly change the set points, rotations, and pump stations, resulting in loss of operations. This can even result in disruption of the supply chain and the processes connected with the affected industries."

APT actors could exploit the exposed VNC deployments not only for sabotage and reconnaissance but also data theft/extortion and ransomware, Cyble warned.

It claimed to have spotted surges in attacks on Port 5900, the default for VNC, between July 9 and August 9 this year, most of which originated from the Netherlands, Russia and Ukraine.

The countries with most exposed VNC instances were China (1555), Sweden (1506), the US (835), Spain (555) and Brazil (529).

"Remotely accessing the IT/OT infrastructure assets is pretty handy and has been widely adopted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and work-from-home policies. However, if organizations do not have the appropriate safety measures and security checks in place, this situation can lead to severe monetary loss," Cyble concluded.

"Leaving VNCs exposed over the internet without any authentication makes it fairly easy for intruders to penetrate the victim's network and create havoc. Attackers might also try to exploit the VNC service by using various vulnerabilities and techniques, allowing them to connect with the exposed asset(s)."

Cyble recommended firms running VNC to improve security awareness training, ensure proper access policies and firewalls are in place, and make sure devices are patched and continuously monitored.

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HEADLINE	08/14 Cisco confirms network breach
SOURCE	https://www.hackread.com/cisco-confirms-breach-employee-google-account-hacked/
GIST	<p>Networking giant Cisco Systems is the latest victim of hacking. The company confirmed that attackers used a compromised Google account of one of its employees after the Yanluowang ransomware gang added a list of files obtained from the company on their data leak site.</p> <p>Hacking Details</p> <p>On Wednesday, August 10th, 2022, Cisco Systems confirmed experiencing a cyberattack that took place on 24 May 2022. Sharing their findings, the networking equipment provider stated that the attackers obtained details of an employee's private Google account, which contained passwords synced with Cisco's web browser.</p> <p>The attackers obtained initial access to its VPN after successfully compromising the Google account. The credentials were synced through the Chrome browser, where the targeted employee had also stored their Cisco credentials.</p> <p>Consequently, attackers could synchronize their Google accounts using this information. On August 10th, the Yanluowang ransomware gang indirectly took responsibility for the breach by publishing files stolen in the data leak.</p>

Investigation of the “Potential Compromise”

Cisco Talos launched an investigation into the May hack and referred to it as a “potential compromise” in its detailed [report](#) published Wednesday. Cisco Talos threat research team conducted the investigation. Forensic details confirmed the involvement of the Yanluowang threat group, which has ties with [Lapsus\\$](#) and [UNC2447](#) cybercrime groups. For your information, Lapsus\$ was behind some of the most high-profile data breaches in recent months including [Microsoft](#), [Okta](#), [T-Mobile](#), [Samsung](#), and [Ubisoft](#).

As for the Cisco breach, the researchers concluded that the attackers couldn’t deploy ransomware successfully but were indeed successful in penetrating its network and planting an array of hacking tools. The attacks, according to researchers, also scanned the company’s internal network, a common practice adopted before deploying ransomware.

How Attackers Bypassed MFA?

Cisco said that hackers used various techniques to bypass the multifactor authentication feature linked to the VPN client. This includes voice phishing (aka [vishing](#)) and MFA fatigue. In MFA fatigue, attackers send push requests in high volume to their targeted device so the user has no choice but to accept to stop the incoming notifications.

Cisco Talos threat researchers identified that Multi-factor Authentication ([MFA](#)) [spoofing attacks](#) were launched against their employees, which were eventually successful, and they could run the VPN software. After obtaining initial access, they enrolled various new devices for MFA and authenticated them successfully to the company’s VPN.

The attacker then accelerated to administrative privileges. Afterward, they could log in to multiple systems. This raised suspicion, and Cisco Security Incident Response Team intervened to mitigate the threat.

Further digging revealed that the ransomware gang used remote access and offensive security tools in the attack. These tools included the following:

- [TeamViewer](#)
- [LogMein](#) (Now GoTo)
- [Mimikatz](#)
- [Impacket](#)
- [PowerSploit](#)
- [Cobalt Strike](#)

Cisco then implemented password reset across the company networks and disclosed their findings in the report. The company has created two Clam AntiVirus signatures to prevent additional compromise.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Flaw in Dept. VA medical records platform?
SOURCE	https://www.wired.com/story/va-vista-medical-records-flaw/
GIST	<p>THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Veterans Affairs runs some interesting technology programs, but it's not known for being a flexible or nimble organization. And when it comes to electronic medical records, the VA has had a slow but high-stakes drama playing out for years.</p> <p>The department's records platform, VistA, first instituted in the late 1970s, is lauded as effective, reliable, and even innovative, but decades of underinvestment have eroded the platform. Multiple times throughout the 2010s, the VA has said it will replace VistA (short for Veterans Information Systems and Technology Architecture) with a commercial product, and the latest iteration of this effort is currently ongoing. In the meantime, however, security researchers are finding real security issues in VistA that could affect patient care. They want to disclose them to the VA and get the issues fixed, but they haven't found a way to do it because VistA itself is on death row.</p>

At the DefCon security conference in Las Vegas on Saturday, Zachary Minneker, a security researcher with a background in health care IT, presented findings about a worrying weakness in how VistA encrypts internal credentials. Without an additional layer of network encryption (like TLS, which is now ubiquitous across the web), Minneker found that the home-brewed encryption developed for VistA in the 1990s to protect the connection between the network server and individual computers can be easily defeated. In practice, this could allow an attacker on a hospital's network to impersonate a health care provider within VistA, and possibly modify patient records, submit diagnoses, or even theoretically prescribe medications.

"If you were adjacent on the network without TLS, you could crack passwords, replace packets, make modifications to the database. In the worst-case scenario, you'd essentially be able to masquerade as a doctor," Minneker tells WIRED. "This is just not a good access control mechanism for an electronic medical record system in the modern era."

Minneker, who is a security engineer at the software-focused firm Security Innovation, only briefly discussed the findings during his DefCon talk, which was mostly focused on a broader security assessment of VistA and the database programming language MUMPS that underlies it. He has been attempting to share the finding with the VA since January through the department's [vulnerability disclosure program](#) and [Bugcrowd](#) third-party disclosure option. But VistA is out of scope for both programs.

This may be because the VA is currently attempting to phase out VistA using a new medical records system designed by Cerner Corporation. In June, the VA announced that it would [delay](#) a general rollout of the \$10 billion Cerner system until 2023, because pilot deployments have been plagued by outages and have led to almost 150 cases in which patients could potentially have [been harmed](#).

The VA did not return WIRED's multiple requests for comment about Minneker's findings or the broader situation with disclosing vulnerabilities in VistA. In the meantime, though, VistA is not only deployed across the VA health care system, it is also used elsewhere.

"There are all sorts of problems with the VA, but everybody loves VistA. It's one of the best EMRs in the world. It's extremely flexible, whereas most EMRs are totally inflexible," Minneker says. "And there are other hospitals that are running VistA that are not VA-related."

Minneker did his assessment of VistA using an automated software-testing technique known as fuzzing, as well as manual code review. He was able to assess VistA's source code because the VA [regularly posts](#) a "Freedom of Information Act" [version](#) that includes all patches released for VistA.

Other researchers have attempted to raise awareness about the importance of securing MUMPS and VistA by investing more in the technology instead of less. At the open source software conference OSCON in 2010, health-care data researcher Fred Trotter [argued](#) that VistA shouldn't be written off, given its value.

"One of the things that really frustrates me with criticisms of MUMPS and VistA is, 'It's old software,'" Trotter said. "This is confusing to me because it's not like an old dog. That dog won't hunt anymore because it's too old. Well, if software is merely old but still works really well, we have a name for that: It's 'stable.'"

The question for Minneker now is whether his presentation will spur public discussion about VistA security and illustrate the need to continue supporting and defending the massive system as long as it is in use.

"VistA is phenomenal, and it could be used more broadly instead of being decommissioned—it's a beautiful dream," Minneker says. "I just couldn't in good conscience be quiet about this problem."

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HEADLINE	08/14 Social media reconnects partition families
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/14/finally-we-are-together-partitions-broken-families-reunite-after-seven-decades

It was an embrace that held 74 years of pain and longing. As Sikka Khan, 75, fell into the arms of his older brother Sadiq Khan, now in his 80s, the pair wept with simultaneous sorrow and joy. More than seven decades had passed since the brothers, torn apart by the horrors of partition, had seen each other. With Sikka in India and Sadiq in [Pakistan](#), neither knew if the other was alive. Yet both had never stopped looking.

But on a crisp January afternoon this year, the pair were reunited along the border that had so devastatingly fractured their family. “Finally, we are together,” Sadiq told his brother, tears streaming down his face.

It was 75 years ago, on 15 August 1947, that the subcontinent was divided down religious lines to become two independent countries, [India](#) and Pakistan. It was to be a bloody and bitter partition. After 300 years of British rule, the key figures of Indian independence, Mahatma Gandhi and his protege and future prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, envisaged a single, secular country. Muslim political leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah, however, argued for a separate state for Muslims, fearful of the implications of a Hindu-majority India.

As religious tensions were stoked, deadly riots broke out, targeting Hindus, then Muslims and then Sikhs. The British, keen to extricate themselves from India quickly, oversaw the drawing of a crude border that ruptured the Indian states of Punjab to the west and Bengal to the east, to form a disjointed Pakistan that angered all communities.

It instigated a mutual genocide on both sides of the new border. Whole villages were set alight, children were massacred, and an estimated 75,000 women were raped. In Punjab, the centre of the violence, pregnant women had babies cut from their bellies and trains full of refugees – Muslims fleeing Indian Punjab, Sikhs and Hindus fleeing western Pakistan – were ambushed and arrived at stations filled with silent bloody corpses.

The true death toll is still unknown, with estimates ranging from 200,000 up to 2 million, and it resulted in the biggest forced migration in history as more than 14 million people fled their homes. From that point onward, India and Pakistan were sworn enemies, split by a border that over decades would become increasingly fractious and impenetrable.

Families caught in the chaos and brutality were forced to leave everything behind and many were separated as they crossed into India or Pakistan. Though many tried desperately to find one other later, via newspaper adverts, letters and messages on noticeboards, cross-border communication was limited. Visa restrictions and a deep-rooted fear of the “other side” also prevented most from ever going back over the border.

But recently, social media has opened up a realm of new possibilities. Facebook pages and YouTube channels, some with thousands of members from India and Pakistan, have begun to reconnect people with the homes and family members lost during partition and the resulting conflict that also split Kashmir.

Video accounts and fragments of information are posted on the pages: a photo or name, a village, or a description of a house. As the posts are shared widely by people on both sides of the border, and by the diaspora across the world, they sometimes turn up leads. While getting a visa to cross the border is still a challenge, video calls have been arranged so that people can see the homes and villages they were forced to leave behind so long ago.

“For those who lived through partition, that yearning for their origins remains very strong,” said Aanchal Malhotra, an author who has spent years documenting the oral history of partition.

“One of the most common things I hear in my research is ‘When I close my eyes, I see my home’ or ‘Every night in my dreams, I cross the border.’ Most people have resigned themselves to the fact they will never see their homes again. But the great power of social media is that it is borderless and it’s been

beautiful to see the way it's been used in India, in Pakistan, in Bangladesh, to connect people to a past they thought they had lost."

Makhu Devi, 87, who lives in Indian-controlled Kashmir, said she had been given a new lease of life after a Facebook group had recently connected her to relatives still living in her old village, now in Pakistan, which she was forced to flee. They now have regular phone calls, though the first few times everyone hardly spoke, as they were crying too heavily. "My memory gets refreshed," said Devi of the calls. "I am taken back to those times. I feel as young and energetic as I was then."

Second and third generations have also embraced social media groups, to connect to an ancestry which often goes undiscussed in families amid a pervasive culture of silence around partition. Lines of cross-border communication have been opened up in innovative ways, including [through dating apps](#). On Instagram it has become common for people to search for hashtags of the cities or villages where their grandparents came from to see what they look like now and find people still living there.

[Punjabi Lehar](#), a YouTube channel set up by Nasir Dhillon, 38, a real estate dealer from Faisalabad Punjab in Pakistan, has made about 800 videos helping people reconnect with a person or a place lost in partition. According to his estimates, 300 have led to in-person reunions between loved ones who were separated by the India-Pakistan border.

Dhillon grew up hearing his family and village elders talk longingly of the ancestral villages they could no longer visit, and he began using social media to share their stories and gather information. But after his posts and videos began to go viral, "the response was so overwhelming that I realised this is the story of the entire Punjab".

"Whatever I am doing is because of my roots," said Dhillon. "We might be living in two hostile countries, but our hearts are still in pre-partition time. I pray there is never a partition like this anywhere in the world – it is a cruel thing."

His greatest regret is that he could not take his father, who died in 2018, to their ancestral family shrine in India, which he finally managed to locate thanks to social media. "He was longing to see his native village till the last days," said Dhillon. He has not yet been able to visit it either; last year India rejected his visa application.

It was thanks to Dhillon's channel that the Khan brothers found each other again. Sikka, who was born to a Muslim family in what is now Indian Punjab, was just six months old when partition violence broke out. Away from home with his mother, they were forced to take shelter with a local Sikh family who were protecting their Muslim neighbours from the massacres.

After weeks of carnage, they emerged, but to terrible scenes. The nearby river was so filled with bodies it ran red with blood. And in Sikka's home village of Jagraon 40 miles away, there were no Muslims left; no trace of Sikka's father, his 10-year-old brother or eight-year-old sister. Sikka's mother, consumed with grief, drowned herself. Sikka was left with no family except a penniless uncle, and was raised by a Sikh family from his mother's village.

He spent his whole adult life trying to find news of his family, particularly his beloved brother Sadiq. He made speculative calls and wrote hundreds of letters to vague addresses in Pakistan, to no avail. He never married; without family around him, he said, "something was always missing so it never felt right".

It was by chance in 2019 that a friend from the village was sent a YouTube video from Punjabi Lehar by a relative. In it, an old man in his 80s living in Pakistan spoke of trying to find the younger brother he had lost after he fled the village of Jagraon during partition. After Dhillon was contacted, it was confirmed: this man was Sadiq Khan.

An emotional video call was arranged between the two brothers, and soon they were speaking to each other every day. Sikka finally learned the story of his family; that his father had been murdered in a

communal attack and his brother and sister had fled to a border refugee camp where his sister had died from illness. Sadiq made it to Pakistan, settled in Faisalabad and had six children and several grandchildren, but never a day went by when he did not think of his lost brother.

The brothers were prevented from meeting for almost three years thanks to visa issues and the Covid pandemic, but in January, a reunion was finally arranged at the Kartarpur corridor, a place of religious pilgrimage recently opened to Indians and Pakistanis. "I felt complete," Sikka said of the encounter. Both brothers agreed: they had stayed alive this long so that they could meet again.

In April, Sikka was finally granted a visa to stay in Pakistan for three months, and Sadiq then came back with him to India for two months. They hope to see each other again soon; Sadiq keeps teasing Sikka that if he returns to Pakistan, he will finally find him a wife.

"Now I don't worry about anything," said Sikka. "I just want to see my brother and stay close to him." But, Sikka added, he was also angry. "Why did they divide this country, divide my family? There are still so many people who have not found their family or not got the visa to go across the border. I was the lucky one."

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HEADLINE	08/14 Frustration mounts over TikTok
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/technology/tiktok-china-washington.html
GIST	<p>WASHINGTON — Early last year, Senator Marco Rubio, a Florida Republican, and Jake Sullivan, President Biden's national security adviser, met to discuss China and industrial policy. During their conversation, Mr. Rubio raised his worries about Beijing's influence over TikTok, the Chinese-owned viral video app.</p> <p>Under former President Donald J. Trump, TikTok had been embroiled in questions over whether it could compromise U.S. national security by sharing information about Americans with China. The issue, which was never resolved, was inherited by the Biden administration. Mr. Sullivan "shared our concerns," Mr. Rubio said in an interview.</p> <p>Their discussion was one of many that lawmakers have quietly had with government officials about TikTok since President Biden took office. Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, the Democratic chairman of the Intelligence Committee, said he had also been in "active conversations" with the administration about the app, which is owned by the Chinese company ByteDance. And regulators and other government officials have been weighing what to do about it after scrutinizing other Chinese firms.</p> <p>These behind-the-scenes conversations signal how tensions over TikTok have simmered in Washington. While the app appeared to fade as a political flashpoint after Mr. Trump left office last year, lawmakers and government officials have privately grown frustrated over the Biden administration's lack of progress in policing TikTok and other Chinese apps that could leak data to Beijing.</p> <p>That dissatisfaction has boiled over into public view in recent months, after new revelations from BuzzFeed and other news outlets about TikTok's data practices and ties to its Chinese parent. Mr. Rubio and Mr. Warner have recently called for a Federal Trade Commission investigation into the app, while a regulator at the Federal Communications Commission publicly said that TikTok should be booted from American app stores.</p> <p>A group of Republican senators has also demanded answers from TikTok about who could access the app's data. On Tuesday, officials in the House of Representatives told staff members that they did not recommend using or downloading the service, citing security concerns, according to an email obtained by The New York Times.</p> <p>"It's just not been a priority over there, unfortunately, and I hope it will become one with the new revelations," Mr. Rubio said of the Biden administration's progress on TikTok.</p>

The bipartisan scrutiny of TikTok, effectively at its most intense since Mr. Trump tried to [force the app's sale](#) to an American buyer in 2020, is mounting as the platform grows ever more popular. With more than one billion users, TikTok has become a prime engine for cultural phenomena, like the scores of young people who posted last month about dressing in suits to see the latest "Minions" movie. Today, 67 percent of 13- to 17-year-olds in the United States use the app, [according to a report last week from the Pew Research Center](#).

TikTok has fought back against the new scrutiny. Shou Zi Chew, its chief executive, [wrote directly to senators](#) in July to "set the record straight" about the app's data practices. Michael Beckerman, a TikTok executive who runs its multimillion-dollar lobbying apparatus, also [went on CNN](#) last month to defend the company.

In an interview, Mr. Beckerman called TikTok's data collection "all very minor" compared with other social apps. To reduce security concerns, the app has said that it plans to store all its American data in the United States, a process that Mr. Beckerman said would likely happen this year. He did not offer a specific date.

The White House may be preparing to act soon on broader policy around apps that could expose data to foreign adversaries. Earlier this year, it [circulated a draft](#) of an executive order that would give the government more power to intercede in cases where data is at risk of being exposed to an adversary. The Biden administration is also expected to issue guidance soon for a committee that vets transactions involving foreign companies, telling it to be especially sensitive to cases that could expose Americans' data to other governments. It is also considering ways to review whole classes of potentially risky deals, rather than approaching them on an individual basis.

"The Biden administration is focused on the challenge of certain countries, including China, seeking to leverage digital technologies and Americans' data in ways that present unacceptable national security risks while advancing authoritarian control and interests," said Saloni Sharma, a spokeswoman for the National Security Council. "The administration is also reviewing additional potential actions to address this challenge."

TikTok has faced security questions for years, especially in 2020 when Mr. Trump [issued an executive order](#) to block it from the Apple and Google app stores unless ByteDance sold the app to an American firm. He later announced a deal to sell part of the app to Oracle, the American cloud computing giant, but it never came to pass. Federal courts eventually ruled that Mr. Trump's order blocking TikTok was illegal, along with another blocking the Chinese-owned app WeChat, and last summer, [Mr. Biden rolled both back](#).

But the government has continued trying to reduce risks associated with TikTok. The app and the committee on foreign investment in the United States, which vets international involvement in deals, have been quietly negotiating a resolution to the government's concerns, according to people tracking the discussions. TikTok has said its plan is to store all its U.S. user data on Oracle's servers in the United States, as opposed to TikTok's servers in Singapore and Virginia.

While a larger team is working on how to cordon off U.S. user data, only around 10 TikTok employees have seen the draft agreement between the company and the government, TikTok said, reflecting the closely held nature of the negotiations.

A spokesman for the Treasury Department, which oversees the committee on foreign investment, declined to comment on TikTok, and said the group is committed to safeguarding national security.

The Commerce Department has the power to review risks from other foreign-owned apps and services. But those reviews have since moved slowly as the agency staffed up for the Biden administration.

"There's a lot of frustration within certain parts of the administration with the lack of progress," said Paul Triolo, a senior vice president for China at Albright Stonebridge Group, a consulting firm.

Ms. Sharma noted that Mr. Biden’s 2021 executive order rolling back Mr. Trump’s TikTok ban had measures to “protect Americans’ sensitive data from collection and utilization by foreign adversaries.” Conversations have also continued behind the scenes between lawmakers and the administration about its plans for TikTok. Mr. Warner said he had experienced “some outreach” from TikTok leadership about their plans for handling data security.

Lawmakers said they remained concerned. Senator Marsha Blackburn, a Tennessee Republican, said in an interview that she believed TikTok’s Mr. Beckerman “danced around the relationship with ByteDance” when he testified at [a 2021 congressional hearing](#) about children’s online safety. Mr. Beckerman denied misleading anyone.

The worries exploded into public view again in June when BuzzFeed [reported](#) that the app’s employees in China had recently been able to access Americans’ data. Gizmodo [later reported](#) that the company had tried downplaying its Chinese ownership.

Brendan Carr, a Republican member of the F.C.C., said he saw the BuzzFeed story and publicly asked Apple and Google to remove TikTok from their app stores in June. Last October, he had also called for the F.C.C. to reviews the risks associated with drones made by DJI, a Chinese company.

“I thought it was totally appropriate to speak up,” Mr. Carr said. The F.C.C. does not regulate mobile apps. Google declined to comment on the letter. Apple did not respond to a request for comment about the message. A Google executive wrote back to Mr. Carr that the company was monitoring the situation “pending congressional and potentially Federal Trade Commission reviews regarding” TikTok.

The unease over TikTok appears unlikely to dissipate in Washington. The memo on Tuesday to House staff members advising against using the app read: “TikTok is a Chinese-owned company, and any use of this platform should be done with that in mind.”

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HEADLINE	08/12 CISA: civilian agencies patch Zimbra bug
SOURCE	https://therecord.media/cisa-orders-civilian-agencies-to-patch-zimbra-bug-after-mass-exploitation/
GIST	<p>The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency added two vulnerabilities found in products from digital collaboration platform Zimbra after a cybersecurity company reported mass exploitation of the bugs throughout July and in early August.</p> <p>On Wednesday, Zimbra released an advisory urging its customers running older versions of the software to immediately install updates. CISA ordered all civilian agencies to install the patches before September 1.</p> <p>Zimbra’s Barry De Graaff said the fixes address an authentication bypass in MailboxImportServlet – CVE-2022-37042 and CVE-2022-27925.</p> <p>Cybersecurity firm Volexity published a report this week noting that it worked on multiple incidents where the victim organization experienced serious breaches to their Zimbra Collaboration Suite (ZCS) email servers through exploitation of CVE-2022-27925, a remote-code-execution vulnerability in ZCS.</p> <p>Volexity explained that CVE-2022-27925 was patched in March and was very difficult to exploit because it required valid administrator credentials.</p> <p>But through its investigations, the company’s researchers found exploitation with no evidence the attackers had the prerequisite authenticated administrative sessions needed to exploit it.</p> <p>They reported the issue to Zimbra, which patched the vulnerability in July and assigned the issue a new name: CVE-2022-37042.</p>

“Through multiple investigations, evidence was uncovered indicating that CVE-2022-27925 was being mass exploited with the authentication bypass as early the end of June 2022. Volexity believes this vulnerability was exploited in a manner consistent with what it saw with Microsoft Exchange 0-day vulnerabilities it discovered in early 2021,” the company said.

“Initially it was exploited by espionage-oriented threat actors, but was later picked up by other threat actors and used in mass-exploitation attempts.”

The company later scanned the internet, finding more than 1,000 ZCS instances around the world that were backdoored and compromised, but Volexity researchers noted that it is likely that the true number of compromised servers is higher.

Nearly 150 were found in the U.S. while over 100 are in Italy and 90 are in Denmark. Volexity said it notified local CERTs of compromised Zimbra instances in their constituency.

The company added that the bug may not be the only exploit for ZCS in use by hackers. CISA itself warned on August 4 that [CVE-2022-27924](#), another ZCS bug, was being exploited and ordered civilian agencies to patch it by August 25.

CISA likely added the bug to its list due to “other active incidents involving breaches beginning with ZCS compromise,” according to Volexity.

“If your organization runs ZCS and did not apply patches 8.8.15P31 or 9.0.0P24 before the end of May 2022, you should consider your ZCS instance may be compromised (and thus all data on it, including email content, may be stolen) and perform a full analysis of the server,” Volexity explained.

“Based on limited testing by Volexity, it seems that patching ZCS instances to the newest version may remove webshells placed in some directories. However, if an attacker installed any second-stage or persistent malware (run via cron), then patching your ZCS instance is insufficient to remediate the compromise.”

Netenrich’s John Bambenek said his main concern with the bugs uncovered recently is centered on how many organizations use Zimbra.

Collaboration tools often have valuable trade secrets, however, the casual conversations that occur there often obscure the seriousness of the value that resides there, Bambenek said.

“In addition, many Zimbra users are smaller, therefore they likely lack security teams and even IT teams may be understaffed so they may not even know there is a problem, much less have the time and availability to address patching,” he explained.

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HEADLINE	08/12 CISA: election security incredibly difficult
SOURCE	https://www.cyberscoop.com/misinformation-election-security-cisa/
GIST	<p>Disinformation has become a much bigger challenge for election officials since the 2020 election, leading the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency to beef up its efforts to fight falsehoods that could undermine the democratic process.</p> <p>The danger of disinformation has become an “incredibly difficult problem,” CISA Director Jen Easterly said Friday during a press briefing at the DEF CON cybersecurity conference in Las Vegas.</p> <p>Easterly has taken several specific steps to fight the problem, including by bringing Kim Wyman, former Secretary of State of Washington, into CISA to bolster its election work. Noting that Wyman is a Republican, Easterly said she has deliberately recruited people from both parties to work on CISA’s election efforts.</p>

“We recognize this is not a partisan issue,” Easterly said, adding that she worked for former President George W. Bush earlier in her career. “Where I fear that the system will break down in a spectacular way is if CISA all of a sudden becomes a partisan agency.”

The threat landscape has evolved considerably since President Biden defeated former President Trump in 2020, she said. Coming out of the 2016 and 2018 elections, DHS and CISA officials were mostly concerned with cybersecurity issues. That’s changed, she said.

“Now the threat landscape is far more complicated,” Easterly said. “We’re still concerned about the cybersecurity side, of course, but we are [also] concerned about insider threats ... and we are focused on threats of [misinformation and disinformation.](#)”

CISA’s information operations team has expanded, and she noted that she recently hired Maria Barsallo Lynch from Harvard University, where she was executive director of the Belfer Center’s Defending Digital Democracy Project.

“The information environment is much more intense than it was,” Easterly said. “John Adams talked about [how] facts are stubborn things. We live in a world where facts are not necessarily as stubborn as they used to be.”

Threats of physical violence against election workers have surged recently, a problem that Easterly said she is “very concerned” about and considers to be the single biggest change since 2020. Many election officials have left office because their families have been threatened, she said.

The complex and multifaceted cyberthreats facing American election infrastructure has left Easterly assuming the midterms and 2024 elections “will be a very challenging time.”

In anticipation of that, CISA is reaching out to secretaries of state to work more closely with local election officials to equip them with tools to beat back disinformation. While it’s not CISA’s role to police social media, she said, her team has “discussions with platforms, but they’re more to understand large trends, not specific tweets.”

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HEADLINE	08/12 Crypto crash impacts ransomware?
SOURCE	https://www.scmagazine.com/analysis/ransomware/how-will-the-crypto-crash-affect-ransomware-attacks-and-payments
GIST	<p>In recent years, cybercriminals have repeatedly requested crypto as their preferred currency for ransomware payments.</p> <p>But with Bitcoin losing more than half of its value this year, those ill-gotten gains have deflated significantly. How will the crash affect ransomware groups? Will it change payment requests from threat actors moving forward?</p> <p>A busted Bitcoin may boost ransomware gangs</p> <p>Business owners have less incentive to continue operating if it becomes less valuable, if common sense is followed. That said, as the crypto market has been volatile over the past few months, many people assume hackers are more likely to shift toward crimes such as malware attacks and phishing scams that target actual dollars.</p> <p>Mark Manglicmot, senior vice president of security services at Arctic Wolf, disagrees with that assumption. He suggested that the unique characteristics of cryptocurrency make it an irreplaceable medium of exchange for cybercrime activities. It is easy, it is fast and, most importantly, its anonymity allows attackers to easily run away with the stolen funds.</p>

"I won't say it is impossible to track cryptocurrency, but it is very difficult," Manglicmot said. "Especially if criminals have converted that money into standard currency."

Ian Thornton-Trump, CISO of [Cyjax Ltd.](#), pointed out that the devaluation of Bitcoin will make cybercriminals "work even harder" on ransomware attacks.

"The crypto crash makes attackers' money worth less, so they will be more aggressive in exploiting companies to extract ransomware in order to keep the lifestyle that they've been accustomed to," he said.

Companies should not drop their guard despite a decline in ransomware attacks

[Ransomware attacks dropped 23% globally](#) from January to June, according to U.S. cybersecurity firm SonicWall's 2022 [mid-year cyber threat report](#). Though this time period overlaps with crypto's bear market, many experts emphasize that the political conflict between Russia and Ukraine is the biggest factor in ransomware's decline.

"I don't think a crypto crash is going to have a massive bearing on whether ransomware occurs or not. Don't forget that we have a massive amount of world hackers tied up right now with the Russia-Ukraine war," said [Micheal Fey](#), co-founder and CEO at [Island](#).

More than half of state-sponsored cyberattacks have been traced back to Russia over the past few years, according to various sources. And 74% of ransomware revenue went to groups that are "[highly likely to be affiliated with Russia](#)."

Manglicmot pointed out that companies should not take the current decline as a reassuring trend. He suggested that "it is only a matter of time before the numbers continue to rise again."

In other words, once the war ceases, there can be another wave of ransomware attacks as cybercriminals are back to their day jobs.

Cybersecurity budgets amid high inflation

Despite the [Biden administration](#) making ransomware defense its top priority last year and cracking down several high-profile hacking groups, there are more challenges ahead amid high inflation.

"With inflation, government departments are going to cut their budgets accordingly. So we are not in a good place of foreseeing a new wave of ransomware attacks coming up and law enforcement budgets being reduced," Thornton-Trump said.

Therefore, It is the time for companies to work internally and strengthen their ransomware defense. For example, companies can start with buying cyber insurance, building 24/7 security operations centers, and having the right representation from cybersecurity at the executive level.

"Ransomware landscape will get worse in the upcoming years, and we should all better prepare for it," Thornton-Trump added.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Killnet 'proof' Lockheed Martin attack
SOURCE	https://www.securityweek.com/killnet-releases-proof-its-attack-against-lockheed-martin
GIST	<p>On August 1, Lockheed Martin was supposedly targeted with a DDoS attack delivered by the pro-Russian hacker group Killnet. The information came via the Moscow Times who reported Killnet's claim for responsibility.</p> <p>Newsweek added that Killnet claimed to have stolen Lockheed Martin employee data and threatened to share that data.</p> <p>There has been no word from Lockheed Martin about the supposed attack beyond telling Newsweek it is "aware of the reports and have policies and procedures in place to mitigate cyber threats to our business,"</p>

adding that “we remain confident in the integrity of our robust, multi-layered information systems and data security.”

Killnet is a pro-Russia group that specializes in DoS and DDoS attacks. It is thought to have been formed in March 2022, and that its primary motivation is retaliation against perceived enemies of Russia. It is believed to be responsible for politically motivated attacks in Romania, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Norway and Latvia – as well as Eurovision 2022.

It claimed responsibility for the attack against Lithuania in late June 2022, which it said was in retaliation for the restrictions imposed by Lithuania against Russia earlier in June.

Lockheed Martin produces the high mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS) provided by the US to Ukraine and used to great effect against the Russian invading army. Lockheed Martin is consequently a natural target for pro-Russia hacking groups.

On August 11, 2022, Killnet reportedly shared a video on its Telegram group that claims to depict PII of Lockheed Martin employees. DDoS attacks are sometimes used to disguise and enable data exfiltration, so the claim is not beyond the bounds of plausibility.

Louise Ferrett, a threat intelligence analyst at Searchlight Security, has examined the video. It comprises, she said, “what appears to be Lockheed Martin employee names, email addresses, and phone numbers, with pictures of people – presumably the employees – overlaid.”

Killnet also uploaded two spreadsheets with the message (translated from Russian), “For those who have nothing to do, you can email Lockheed Martin Terrorists – photos and videos of the consequences of their manufactured weapons! Let them realize what they create and what they contribute to.”

However, Ferret is not convinced. “Cross-referencing a sample of the data it does appear that they are or were genuine Lockheed employees, however that does not necessarily confirm that the company was breached,” she said. “For example, this could be a re-hash of old or open source data in an attempt to undermine the organization and intimidate its employees.”

On the one hand, Lockheed Martin has said nothing about an attack, nevermind a breach. That, however, proves nothing either way. On the other hand, Killnet has failed to provide irrefutable evidence of exfiltrated data – which again doesn’t prove anything.

Without a comment from Lockheed Martin or proof from Killnet, this is more likely to be a propaganda exercise from a pro-Russian hacking group than a successful attack against Lockheed Martin. SecurityWeek has asked the HIMARS manufacturer for a comment on Killnet’s latest claims and will append any response we receive.

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HEADLINE	08/12 NHS ransomware recovery to take weeks
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/recovery-nhs-ransomware-attack/
GIST	<p>A key NHS IT partner that was hit by a ransomware attack last week has said it could take three to four weeks before all systems are back to normal.</p> <p>Advanced runs several key systems for the health service, including clinical patient management software (Adastra) and financial management software (eFinancials).</p> <p>One of its most important healthcare clients is NHS 111, a phone and online-based service designed to dispense medical advice for urgent problems.</p> <p>When ransomware struck the MSP in early August 2022, the UK Government tried to play down the seriousness of the incident claiming "minimal disruption". However, reports suggested that it disrupted</p>

patient referrals, out-of-hours appointment bookings, emergency prescriptions and even ambulance dispatches.

In a lengthy update published on August 10, Advanced said it was working with Mandiant, Microsoft DART and the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to investigate and remediate, with no further incidents detected and the original breach contained.

“With respect to the NHS, we are working with them and the NCSC to validate the additional steps we have taken, at which point the NHS will begin to bring its services back online. For NHS 111 and other urgent care customers using Adastra and NHS Trusts using eFinancials, we anticipate this phased process to begin within the next few days,” [Advanced said](#).

“For other NHS customers and care organisations our current view is that it will be necessary to maintain existing contingency plans for at least three to four more weeks. We are working tirelessly to bring this timeline forward, and while we are hopeful to do so, we want our customers to be prepared. We will continue to provide updates as we make progress.”

Other Advanced services impacted by the attack are its care home management software (Caresys), clinical decision support tool (Odyssey), patient record software (Carenotes), clinical management service (Crosscare) and care management software (Staffplan).

It is still unclear which ransomware group was responsible and whether data was exfiltrated during the attack.

Before bringing systems back online, the MSP said it is:

- Implementing extra blocking rules and further restricting privileged accounts for its own staff
- Scanning all impacted systems and ensuring they are fully patched
- Resetting credentials
- Deploying additional endpoint detection and response agents
- Conducting 24/7 monitoring

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HEADLINE	08/12 CISA: Zeppelin victims need multiple keys
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/zeppelin-victims-multiple/
GIST	<p>The US authorities have warned that victims of a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) family may require multiple unique decryption keys to stand a chance of getting their data back.</p> <p>The US Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) said in a new alert that the Zeppelin variant has been around since at least 2019, with ransoms ranging from several thousand dollars to \$1m+.</p> <p>“The FBI has observed instances where Zeppelin actors executed their malware multiple times within a victim’s network, resulting in the creation of different IDs or file extensions, for each instance of an attack,” the CISA added. “This results in the victim needing several unique decryption keys.”</p> <p>Zeppelin, which is said to be derived from the Delphi-based Vega malware family, has targeted a wide range of organizations including those in the defense, education, manufacturing and technology sectors. However, its main targets have been in the healthcare and medical industries, according to CISA.</p> <p>“Zeppelin actors gain access to victim networks via RDP exploitation, exploiting SonicWall firewall vulnerabilities and phishing campaigns,” the alert noted.</p> <p>“Prior to deploying Zeppelin ransomware, actors spend one to two weeks mapping or enumerating the victim network to identify data enclaves, including cloud storage and network backups. Zeppelin actors can deploy Zeppelin ransomware as a .dll or .exe file or contained within a PowerShell loader.”</p>

	<p>In the phishing scenario, threat actors aim to trick users into clicking on a malicious link or opening a booby-trapped attachment in order to execute malicious macros, CISA said.</p> <p>Like most ransomware actors today, Zeppelin affiliates also try to exfiltrate data before deploying their final payload and leaving a ransom note.</p> <p>CISA listed a long line of recommended mitigations for Zeppelin, ranging from best practice password management and multi-factor authentication to regular patching, network segmentation, disabling unused ports and maintaining offline data backups.</p> <p>Organizations should also disable command-line and scripting activities and permissions, follow an access policy of least privilege, and implement time-based access for accounts set at admin level and higher, it said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Govt. unmask key suspect of Conti
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/us-unmasks-suspected-conti/
GIST	<p>The US government has for the first time revealed the identity of whom it believes to be a key member of one of the most prolific ransomware groups around.</p> <p>The photo adjoins a new \$10m reward put out by the State Department’s Rewards for Justice program, for information leading to the identification or location of members of the Conti group.</p> <p>The reward lists the aliases of five suspected associates of the group: “Target,” “Reshaev,” “Professor,” “Tramp,” and “Dandis.” The US government believes the individual in the photo is “Target.”</p> <p>“Conti (also known as Wizard Spider), is a Russian government-linked ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) group that has targeted US and Western critical infrastructure,” the notice reads.</p> <p>“After Russian military forces invaded neighboring Ukraine in February 2022, Conti ransomware operators pledged support to the Russian government and threatened critical infrastructure organizations of countries perceived to carry out cyber-attacks or war against the Russian government.”</p> <p>The State Department said the group first surfaced in 2019 and has targeted over 1000 victim organizations, including law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, 911 dispatch centers, and local government.</p> <p>Conti shut down its leak site earlier this year and appeared to disband following a major data leak which exposed all of its internal communications from over a year.</p> <p>However, it’s believed that its members will either join other operations or rebrand, as many outfits do when media and law enforcement attention becomes too intense. The group had already effectively rebranded from Ryuk in 2020.</p> <p>The leaks revealed the scale of the operation: claiming that the group spent \$6m annually on salaries, tools and services. Analysts observing its Bitcoin address said it received over \$2.7bn over the past few years, making it one of the most successful groups ever.</p> <p>In May 2022, the US government offered a \$10m reward for info on the lead Conti actors via the Department of State’s Transnational Organized Crime Rewards Program (TOCRP).</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 SolidBit ransomware recruiting affiliates
SOURCE	https://www.infosecurity-magazine.com/news/solidbit-ransomware-recruiting/

GIST	<p>A threat actor group named SolidBit is actively advertising RaaS (Ransom-as-a-Service) and looking to recruit new affiliates on dark web forums.</p> <p>The news comes from CloudSEK security researchers, who published an advisory about the new threat actors on Thursday.</p> <p>“The group is actively looking for partners to gain access to companies’ private networks in order to spread the ransomware called SolidBit,” read the document.</p> <p>In particular, according to a SolidBit post viewed by CloudSEK on an unnamed underground forum, 20% of the earned profit from the distribution of the ransomware will be paid to the affiliate for infecting private servers.</p> <p>From samples CloudSEK found during its investigation between June and July, the security experts suggested SolidBit may be a copycat of the infamous LockBit ransomware.</p> <p>The analysis suggests the malware is executed after downloading some malicious applications.</p> <p>“Upon extracting the repository and executing the application, all the files are encrypted with a .solibit extension and the SolidBit ransomware pop-up appears, containing the ransom note.”</p> <p>A text file called then opens, which describes the basic steps on how to decrypt infected files by paying a ransom.</p> <p>“The text file contains the decryption ID as well as the login page for the ransomware website,” CloudSEK said. “Upon logging in, the user is directed to the homepage of the ransomware website.”</p> <p>Once on the website, users are then able to chat with the threat actor (chat with support) or trial the decryption algorithms (only for files less than 1MB).</p> <p>“The samples did not contain any communication screenshots, however, it is possible that direct communication with the threat actors is possible via the chat system,” says the advisory.</p> <p>In terms of attribution, CloudSEK found a Twitter post that shared a link to a GitHub repository created by a user named L0veRust, which contained an application used to deliver the ransomware.</p> <p>To mitigate the impact of the malware, CloudSEK recommended companies to enable tools and applications that prevent malicious programs from being executed, as well as updating and patching infrastructure fulcra such as servers and computer systems.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Chinese hackers backdoor chat app
SOURCE	https://www.bleepingcomputer.com/news/security/chinese-hackers-backdoor-chat-app-with-new-linux-macos-malware/?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>Versions of a cross-platform instant messenger application focused on the Chinese market known as 'MiMi' have been trojanized to deliver a new backdoor (dubbed rshell) that can be used to steal data from Linux and macOS systems.</p> <p>SEKOIA's Threat & Detection Research Team says that the app's macOS 2.3.0 version has been backdoored for almost four months, since May 26, 2022.</p> <p>They discovered this after noticing unusual connections to this app while analyzing command-and-control (C2) infrastructure for the HyperBro remote access trojan (RAT) malware linked to the APT27 Chinese-backed threat group.</p>

TrendMicro also [reported](#) detecting the same campaign and said it found old trojanized versions of MiMi targeting Linux (with rshell) and Windows (with HyperBro), with the oldest Linux rshell sample in June 2021 and the first victim being reported back in mid-July 2021.

The malicious JavaScript code implanted in MiMi's source code first checks if the app runs on a Mac device and then downloads and executes the rshell backdoor, as SEKOIA discovered.

Once launched, the malware will harvest and send system information to its C2 server and wait for commands from the APT27 threat actors.

The attackers can use it to list folders and files and to read, download, and write files on compromised systems. The backdoor also comes with support for an upload command that instructs it to send files to its C2 server.

The malware was linked to APT27 based on overlapping infrastructure using the same IP address range and common tactics (backdooring Able Desktop messaging app in [Operation StealthyTrident](#) and packing malicious code with the [Dean Edwards Javascript packer](#)).

"At this stage, SEKOIA is not able to assess the objective of this campaign. As this application's use in China appears low, it is plausible it was developed as a targeted surveillance tool," the researchers said.

"It is also likely that, following social engineering carried out by the operators, targeted users are encouraged to download this application, purportedly to circumvent Chinese authorities' censorship."

Also targeting Zoho and Exchange servers

[APT27](#) (aka Emissary Panda, Iron Tiger, and LuckyMouse) is a Chinese-backed threat group active for over a decade (since at least 2010) and known for its focus on cyber espionage and information theft campaigns.

Since March 2021, the group has been breaching and infecting servers running vulnerable Zoho AdSelf Service Plus software—a password management solution for cloud apps and Active Directory—with several malware strains, including the HyperBro RAT.

These attacks [compromised at least nine entities from critical sectors worldwide](#), including defense, healthcare, energy, and technology.

In January, the BfV German domestic intelligence services (short for Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz) also [warned of APT27 attacks](#) against German commercial organizations using the same tactic.

APT27 and other Chinese-sponsored threat groups have also been linked in the past [to attacks exploiting ProxyLogon bugs](#) starting with early March 2021 and allowing them to steal data from unpatched Microsoft Exchange servers worldwide.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Updated Android banking trojan SOVA
SOURCE	https://www.darkreading.com/endpoint/ransomware-sova-android-banking-trojan?&web_view=true
GIST	<p>The Android banking Trojan SOVA is back and sporting updated capabilities — with an additional version in development that contains a ransomware module.</p> <p>Researchers at Cleafy, which documented the resurgence of SOVA, say that version 4 appears to be targeting more than 200 mobile applications, including banking apps and crypto exchanges/wallets. Spain appears to be the country most targeted by the malware, followed by the Philippines and the US.</p> <p>The SOVA v4 malware is hidden within fake Android applications disguised by the logos of popular apps including Chrome and Amazon. The latest version includes a refactored and improved cookie-stealer mechanism, which can now specify a list of targeted Google services and other applications. In addition,</p>

the update allows the malware to protect itself by intercepting and deflecting attempts made by victims to uninstall the app.

Also in the latest versions of SOVA, attackers can control the specific targets via the command-and-control (C2) interface. This increases the adaptability of the malware to a large variety of attack scenarios.

In addition, it has capabilities that allow attackers to grab screenshots, and to record and execute commands. This enables an attacker to look for ways to laterally move around to other systems or applications that might be more lucrative.

"The most interesting part is related to the [virtual network computing] capability," the report notes. "This feature has been in the SOVA roadmap since September 2021 and that is strong evidence that [threat actors] are constantly updating the malware with new features and capabilities."

Ransomware on the Horizon

The Cleafy team also found evidence that suggested that an additional version of the malware, version 5, is in development and will include a ransomware module that had previously been announced in a September 2021 development roadmap.

"The ransomware feature is quite interesting as it's still not a common one in the Android banking-trojan landscape," Cleafy researchers note. "It strongly leverages on the opportunity that has arisen in recent years, as mobile devices became for most people the central storage for personal and business data."

Cory Cline, senior cyber security consultant at nVisium, says that adding ransomware capabilities to a banking Trojan offers plenty of upside to cybercriminals.

"No longer do they need to steal your personal data to get access to your financial information," he explains. "With ransomware capabilities, attackers can now encrypt affected devices."

He adds that with more and more people storing nearly every aspect of their lives on their mobile devices, attackers will be able to more easily find targets willing to pay to get access to their data returned.

"The team behind SOVA has demonstrated a new level of sophistication," he says. "The feature set is fairly unique to the Android banking Trojan scene, and SOVA is one of the most feature-rich Android banking Trojans available."

However, he points out that the team behind SOVA has opted to implement Retrofit for C2 as opposed to writing its own solution.

"This could speak to some limitations in the development team," Cline says.

Banking Trojans Get Boost From Added Capabilities

Other banking Trojans have also resurfaced with updated features to help skate past security, including Emotet, which re-emerged [earlier this summer](#) in a more advanced form after having been taken down by joint international task force in January 2021.

Joseph Carson, chief security scientist and Advisory CISO at Delinea, says that improving and evolving existing Android banking Trojans has many advantages.

"The significant improvements to SOVA v4 and SOVA v5 show that attackers can simply expand existing features such as the cookies stealer, which now includes more payment services and applications to exploit," he points out. "New modules such as those targeting cryptowallets demonstrate that attackers see cryptocurrencies as a lucrative target."

He explains that adding ransomware capabilities can have multiple advantages for attackers, such as destroying evidence. That makes it difficult for digital forensics to discover any traces or attribution of the

	<p>attacker, and gives the attacker an additional option to get paid when stealing credentials or cookies is not successful.</p> <p>"As new Internet services specifically in the financial industry get adopted," Carson says, "attackers will need to keep updating banking Trojans with new modules just like any other software company to stay compatible with newer technologies."</p>
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Terrorism, Extremism

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HEADLINE	08/15 Taliban rout still evokes raw emotions
SOURCE	https://www.stripes.com/veterans/2022-08-15/afghanistan-one-year-later-6968602.html
GIST	<p>It's been a year since the Taliban swept into Kabul, and the images of terrified Afghans fleeing their homeland have largely faded from the memories of Americans who viewed the evacuation passively from afar.</p> <p>But for many of the Americans who tried to help, sometimes without success, and the Afghans who braved the crowds and checkpoints for a chance at freedom, the last two weeks of August 2021 remain indelibly seared into their consciousness.</p> <p>Stars and Stripes spoke to some of them over the past year, and here are their stories:</p> <p>The refugees</p> <p>"I'll never be able to forget those moments," said Laily Ghawsi, the wife of an Afghan interpreter and U.S. citizen who was stranded in Afghanistan when the country fell.</p> <p>She recalled searching for a path through the thousands of people surrounding the airport in Kabul as Taliban fighters shot seemingly endless rounds into the sky.</p> <p>The Taliban had signed a deal with the U.S. in 2020 that traded an American withdrawal for vague promises of peace talks and counterterrorism guarantees.</p> <p>After that deal, province after province fell to a Taliban offensive. The Afghan forces that the U.S. had spent two decades training melted away.</p> <p>President Ashraf Ghani fled Kabul on Aug. 15, sparking an exodus of people affiliated with the U.S. and its allies. Thousands overran Kabul's airport seeking a flight out.</p> <p>Laily Ghawsi, 22, navigated the chaos via the phone in her hand. That phone was her lifeline to her husband, Hekmat, on the other side of the world in Las Vegas as he tried to direct her to someone inside the airport who could snatch her from the crowd and bring her to safety.</p> <p>Hekmat Ghawsi feared that his wife would be targeted or harassed because of his previous work as an interpreter for U.S. troops.</p> <p>The 32-year-old had received a Special Immigrant Visa to come to the U.S. in 2014. He started work as an Uber driver in Las Vegas and married his wife in Kabul in 2020 with hopes of bringing her to the U.S.</p> <p>During the evacuation, he reconnected with the American soldiers with whom he had worked in a bid to reunite with his wife.</p> <p>On Aug. 19, 2021, Laily Ghawsi led a small group of women, all wives of interpreters, into the crowd at the airport. She recalled tear gas wafting through the air and difficulty breathing. Some people passed out or were trampled underneath the masses. She feared for her life.</p>

She and the other interpreters' wives could not find a way into the airport that day.

Hekmat recalled a mixture of feelings: bravado, filling him with the desire to fly there and rescue her, like James Bond; helplessness at not knowing whether he could get her out of the crowd; and fear that he was sending her to the wrong gate, into greater danger.

To Hekmat and others trying to guide people into the airport, there seemed to be a chaotic lottery in which some with adequate paperwork were turned away, while others with no documentation or connection to the U.S. got in.

On Aug. 24, Laily Ghawsi and the other wives finally reached the inside of the airport, just a few days before U.S. troops left the country.

But as the military aircraft took off from Kabul, Laily Ghawsi realized that leaving Afghanistan was closing a chapter of her life and beginning another one in an unknown land. She wondered whether she would ever see her family again, and she felt guilt about leaving them behind.

"That was the quiet moment for me," she said. "That was the moment that I broke into tears, and I cried almost the whole flight."

The troops

American service members who had direct involvement in the evacuation said they are still affected by those events a year later.

Marines, soldiers, sailors and airmen rushed to Afghanistan and bases in the Middle East during the final phase of the war. Together, they evacuated more than 120,000 people.

They were suddenly thrust into an unprecedented, risky and sometimes overwhelming new mission.

"You see humanity at its best and a little bit of humanity at its worst," recalled Col. Amy Rivera, who was the 379th Air Expeditionary Wing's director of staff during the evacuation at Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar.

Many of those lucky enough to be plucked from the crowds at Kabul airport were brought to U.S. bases in the Middle East like Al Udeid. They were held at these bases until cleared to go to other military installations to continue their visa processing.

The airmen at Al Udeid rehearsed for an evacuation on Aug. 4, said Senior Master Sgt. Megan Harper, operations superintendent of the 379th Security Forces Squadron during the evac.

But that preparation was for the U.S. Embassy staff, an estimated 2,500 people. It did not anticipate the 60,000 or so people arriving from the seemingly endless chain of aircraft coming from Kabul, she said.

"We got overwhelmed so quickly," Harper said in a recent interview.

Conditions became "deplorable," she recalled. Supplies began running out. Tensions rose in the sweltering heat. Evacuees fought over baby formula and cots. At one point, 6,000 or so evacuees crowded a hangar meant for airplanes or at most 2,500 people, Harper said.

Harper said she could recognize, in part, the desperation of those whose lives had been upended. But on another level, she could not understand what would motivate someone to push an old man off a cot and onto the floor in a skirmish for sleeping space.

Humanitarian missions expose troops to not just the shock of seeing innocent people dying or suffering, but also to the trauma of seeing "the worst in people, when everyone is desperate," said Amy Williams,

chief clinical officer at the New York-based Headstrong Project, which provides mental health treatment to veterans.

One day, an airman showed Harper what appeared to be a key to someone's house. She said she told the airman that none of the evacuees was likely returning to Afghanistan soon enough for that key to matter. And yet, she said, she could not throw the key away. That felt wrong.

"The reality of what was to come for the evacuees really hit me at that specific moment," Harper said. "They had to leave so quickly, with what they could carry."

On Aug. 16, a plane that was feared to have been hijacked approached Al Udeid for landing, Harper said. Two men at the Kabul airport had brandished guns to force themselves onto a military plane, Harper said.

Security forces rushed to surround the plane, Reach 871, on the runway. Then the rear door of the plane dropped. The airmen learned that the two men had given up their weapons to the crew and were now more panicked than hostile.

The focus became the welfare of the hundreds of people onboard the overloaded aircraft and taking them off the plane before the intense heat in Qatar caused them to pass out.

"When you drop that door and the first person who comes off is a 5-year-old little girl, now your mentality has to shift," said Harper, who still keeps a letter from an Afghan girl thanking the airmen for their hospitality.

Another airman, Staff Sgt. Duncan Copley faced a similar dilemma in Kabul on the day that he heard through his headset that there may be a bomb on his plane.

The bomb threat came on Copley's final flight out of Kabul, as the plane sat on the runway. The crew was on edge, Copley recalled in a recent interview.

Just two days before, a suicide bomber hidden among the crowd at Abbey Gate at the Kabul airport killed 13 service members as well as 170 civilians.

The crew was told that everyone needed to leave the plane so Marines could check the passengers and their bags for explosives. But some passengers didn't want to get off.

The 23-year-old loadmaster recalled thinking that they may have been afraid they wouldn't be allowed back on. But he also wondered if perhaps they could be the threat everyone was looking for.

The Marines searched everyone, including the passengers who originally did not want to get off. They did not find a bomb, but they could not be 100% sure that one wasn't hidden somewhere.

The hardest decision, Copley recalled, was whether to take off, to trust that someone hadn't missed something, to risk the plane and the lives of those on board by flying.

"Saving all of these people was worth risking it, getting them out of there," Copley recalled.

The weight of the risks he and the crew took didn't register with him until weeks later, he said.

The veterans

For many veterans and service members, the year since the last U.S. soldier in Afghanistan, Maj. Gen. Chris Donahue, ascended into the sky on a C-17 prompted reflection on whether their efforts had any meaning.

“The withdrawal of American troops out of Afghanistan really forced military personnel and veterans to examine their service, especially as it connected to Afghanistan,” Laura Falk, a former Air Force chaplain’s assistant, said in a recent interview.

Falk, a licensed mental health counselor, started a virtual support group on Zoom last fall for the veterans, troops and other volunteers involved in the evacuation.

She found that many veterans felt angry and ashamed after witnessing the messy withdrawal and the Afghan military’s sudden collapse. Many felt gutted by the thought that some people who worked with them had been left behind.

“It was very traumatic for many folks, both active-duty and veterans,” Falk said. “A lot of individuals, especially veterans, were left asking ‘What did it all mean? What did our service mean? Why did we sacrifice so much for it to end like this?’”

Some who volunteered during the evacuation said their memories of what they accomplished on deployments were rewritten into failures to protect allies.

Air Force veteran Christy Barry said the part of her “that used to be a patriotic American has died” after she couldn’t evacuate an Afghan general with whom she had worked.

Those who continue to care about Afghanistan grew alienated from a public that quickly lost interest, several veterans said.

“People are just assuming that we got short memories, we’re just going to forget about it,” said Stephanie Hall, an Air Force chief warrant officer who trained Afghan pilots. “The veterans aren’t going to forget about it.”

Safi Rauf, a Navy corpsman who had become a U.S. citizen after immigrating from Afghanistan as a teen, continued to help get people out even after the last American soldier left.

He and his brother were detained by the Taliban after flying to Afghanistan last winter. A monthslong campaign by the administration of President Joe Biden led to their release after 105 days, the State Department said in April.

After re-emerging from prison, Rauf was struck by how little had improved. Mass hunger had worsened. The Taliban’s promise to allow girls to go to secondary school was rescinded in March. People affiliated with the U.S. still sought refuge abroad.

But the biggest change he saw was that most Americans had stopped caring.

“As much as I was happy to be out of captivity, I was very disappointed,” Rauf said. “The problem has only gotten worse, but the interest from the government and from the public has dwindled to nothing.”

Like other veterans who have spoken to Stars and Stripes over the years, Rauf lamented the loss of two decades of progress in human rights and democracy in the country.

But others said that whatever good the U.S. claimed it was trying to do in Afghanistan, the American military and the Afghan government it backed killed thousands of people, often creating more enemies with those deaths.

The evacuation last year included a botched drone strike that killed an aid worker in Kabul who U.S. military officials falsely believed was a terrorist.

“We were fighting a war on terror with more terror,” said Lisa Ling, a former Air Force technical sergeant on drone surveillance systems who traveled to Afghanistan as a civilian. “We didn’t have the cultural competency to be actually helpful.”

Only 22% of Americans believe that the Afghan War made the United States safer, although more people than not said they approved of the way the military handled itself, according to a survey released Aug. 10 by the U.K. research group More in Common.

Several veterans said they still believe the withdrawal of American forces was the right choice, even if they disagreed with the execution of it.

Adam Weinstein, a Marine veteran who deployed to the country in 2012, staunchly supported full withdrawal from Afghanistan. And last fall, the U.S. did as he had advocated in his position as a research fellow at the Washington, D.C.-based Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

But he experienced mixed feelings over the past year, said Weinstein. He still believes withdrawal was the right choice because in his view, the war had been lost long ago and staying would have required another surge of troops.

But he wishes that more thought had been given for those who had supported the U.S. and were caught on the losing side.

“I think many government officials and analysts got many things about the war in Afghanistan wrong,” Weinstein said. “The ultimate victims were Afghans.”

A new home

Afghan evacuees who made it to the U.S. over the past year found themselves adjusting to a world that was alien to them.

People who had grown up in large extended families were now severed indefinitely from their relatives. Soldiers who were told they were on the front lines of the war on terrorism now work at laundromats.

“The most difficult part of my life has been and is that my strength is fighting in Afghanistan against global terrorism, and I am not able to help,” said Abdul Mateen Sulaimankhail, a former Afghan army commander who is now unemployed after evacuating to Georgia.

For Laily Ghawsi, the woman who fought through the crowds at the Kabul airport to reunite with her husband, the past year had both bitterness and sweetness.

She gained a new home in the U.S. with her husband, but she also lost family members in her previous home. On the same day she reunited with her husband, Sept. 10, 2021, her father died. A month later, her grandmother died as well.

Her husband said he sees her crying from time to time about the loved ones she left behind.

About a week after Laily arrived in Las Vegas, Hekmat took her to the Kolob Reservoir, near Zion National Park in Utah. The two walked along trails.

In previous messages while Laily was still in Afghanistan, the two had imagined a life together in Hekmat’s adopted country.

Hekmat Ghawsi said he always talked to his wife about his love of nature. But Laily never understood the appeal of being alone in the mountains, he said.

That day in Utah, Laily Ghawsi began to understand her husband’s love of nature, as well as what it meant to be in America, the couple said.

Laily Ghawsi recalled how she always had to be on the lookout in Afghanistan for potential danger. And then she recalled her fear as she fought through the crowds at the airport in Kabul and the confinement she felt while waiting for visa processing at U.S. bases in Kuwait and during her stay at Fort McCoy, Wis., one of the bases that processed Afghan refugees brought to the U.S.

“Fort McCoy, they had all these fences,” she said. “They blocked the nature. But over there, by Kolob Reservoir, the trees and greenery, the water and everything, it was just open nature, and beautiful.”

Hekmat Ghawsi said he recalled his wife telling him that “no one bothers anyone here.”

He is still trying to help people in Afghanistan. Despite struggles to stay afloat financially in the U.S., he runs a charity to send money back home.

If he were in the shoes of one of those interpreters on the other end of his cellphone, he would want someone to try to help, he said.

Laily said she wishes her husband would put down his phone more often. The couple have a son, Jasoor, born on Laily's birthday, July 7. She said she thinks constantly of their son's future, and she hopes her remaining family in Afghanistan can see him one day.

“I will always remember these events, traumatic events, sadness and sorrows in my life,” she said. “But I want to make sure that that doesn't get in the way of today and tomorrow.”

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HEADLINE	08/15 Afghanistan: 1yr since Taliban seizure
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/afghanistan-poverty-economy-kabul-taliban-cc5a327e607fd5fa1f64eae0e152e973
GIST	<p>KABUL (AP) — The Taliban on Monday marked a year since they seized the Afghan capital of Kabul, a rapid takeover that triggered a hasty escape of the nation's Western-backed leaders, sent the economy into a tailspin and fundamentally transformed the country.</p> <p>Bearded Taliban fighters, some hoisting rifles or the white banners of their movement, staged small victory parades on foot, bicycles and motor cycles in the streets of the capital. One small group marched past the former U.S. Embassy, chanting “Long live Islam” and “Death to America.”</p> <p>A year after the dramatic day, much has changed in Afghanistan. The former insurgents struggle to govern and remain internationally isolated. The economic downturn has driven millions more Afghans into poverty and even hunger, as the flow of foreign aid slowed to a trickle.</p> <p>Meanwhile, hard-liners appear to hold sway in the Taliban-led government, which imposed severe restrictions on access to education and jobs for girls and women, despite initial promises to the contrary. A year on, teenage girls are still barred from school and women are required to cover themselves head-to-toe in public, with only the eyes showing.</p> <p>Some are trying to find ways to keep education from stalling for a generation of young women and underground schools in homes have spring up.</p> <p>A year ago, thousands of Afghans had rushed to Kabul International Airport to flee the Taliban amid the U.S. military's chaotic withdrawal from Kabul after 20 years of war — America's longest conflict.</p> <p>Some flights resumed relatively quickly after those chaotic days. On Monday, a handful of commercial flights were scheduled to land and take off from a runway that last summer saw Afghan men clinging to the wheels of planes taking off, some falling to their death.</p>

	<p>Schoolyards stood empty Monday as the Taliban announced a public holiday to mark the day, which they refer to as “The Proud Day of Aug. 15” and the “First Anniversary of the Return to Power.”</p> <p>“Reliance on God and the support of the people brought this great victory and freedom to the country,” wrote Abdul Wahid Rayan, the head of the Taliban-run Bakhtar News Agency. “Today, Aug. 15, marks the victory of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan against America and its allies occupation of Afghanistan.”</p> <p>On the eve of the anniversary, former Afghan President Ashraf Ghani defended what he said was a split-second decision to flee, saying he wanted to avoid the humiliation of surrender to the insurgents. He told CNN that on the morning of Aug. 15, 2021, with the Taliban at the gates of Kabul, he was the last one at the presidential palace after his guards had disappeared.</p> <p>Tomas Niklasson, the European Union’s special envoy to Afghanistan, said the bloc of nations remains committed to the Afghan people and to “stability, prosperity and sustainable peace in Afghanistan and the region.”</p> <p>“This will require an inclusive political process with full, equal and meaningful participation of all Afghan men and women and respect for human rights,” Niklasson wrote.</p> <p>German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said an international responsibility toward Afghanistan remains after the NATO withdrawal.</p> <p>“A regime that tramples on human rights cannot under any circumstances be recognized,” she said in a statement. “But we must not forget the people in Afghanistan, even a year after the Taliban takeover.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Airstrike targets Al-Shabab central Somalia
SOURCE	https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-14/somalia-says-13-suspected-terrorists-killed-in-us-air-strike
GIST	<p>A US air strike killed 13 members of the al-Shabab Islamist terrorist group in the Hiiran region of central Somalia on Sunday, state-owned national television reported, citing Somali army officials.</p> <p>US air strikes previously killed four al-Shabab fighters on Aug. 9 after they attacked Somali forces, according to a US Africa Command statement on Wednesday. There was no immediate US statement on the latest reported strike.</p> <p>The US has redeployed hundreds of troops to the East African country, returning to the region after former President Donald Trump ordered a withdrawal.</p> <p>At the same time, Somalia’s worst drought in more than 40 years has internally displaced 1 million people since January 2021, according to the United Nations.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Report: Afghan chaos, disaster withdrawal
SOURCE	https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2022/aug/14/afghanistan-chaos-gop-report-reveals-new-details-d/
GIST	<p>It was the height of the chaotic U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan, and first lady Jill Biden’s office went outside the normal channels and begged veterans groups to help find a way to evacuate people having trouble navigating the process.</p> <p>So did Vice President Kamala Harris’ office, top Defense Department officials and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, according to a report released Sunday by House Republicans that details the depths of the Biden administration’s failures during the last days of the U.S. mission in Afghanistan.</p>

The fact that President Biden's own circle had to go outside his process to get help underscores just how badly the administration planned and executed the U.S. retreat, concludes the report, released by Rep. Michael T. McCaul, the top Republican on the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"There was a complete lack and failure to plan," Mr. McCaul told CBS's "Face the Nation" as he revealed the report. "There were so many mistakes."

Monday marks one year since Afghanistan's Western-backed government was toppled by a resurgent Taliban. The Taliban moved on Kabul as U.S. troops were pulling out, rushing to meet Mr. Biden's Aug. 31 deadline for ending a 20-year, \$1 trillion commitment.

With stark new findings, Mr. McCaul's team said, the chaos was even worse than it appeared.

The evacuation started late, it miscalculated at many turns, it abandoned tens of thousands of allies it should have saved while bringing out tens of thousands of others with only the most tenuous ties to the U.S., and it may have allowed the Aug. 26 suicide bomb attack that killed 13 American troops.

Among the report's conclusions:

- The number of American citizens the administration said were left behind and looking to get out was much lower than the 100 or so reported. The State Department has brought out some 800 since Aug. 31, and that doesn't include those rescued by private groups.

- At the height of the evacuation, only 36 consular officers were working at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, creating a logjam that spilled out to the gates. People were denied entry because of the backlog.

"This drastically limited the number of people we were able to evacuate. And it likely led to sloppy processing as officers were drastically overwhelmed," the investigation concludes.

- Afghan women involved in their country's modernization effort had a particularly tough time trying to get to the airport. They risked beatings or shootings if they weren't accompanied by a male. Only 25% of those who did make it out were women or girls. In the final days of the evacuation, a convoy of 1,000 women and girls circled the airport for hours in a failed attempt to enter. Less than a third have been able to escape since the U.S. troop withdrawal.

- Thousands of Afghan security force members, including some highly trained commandos, fled across the border into Iran, creating a national security risk should a foreign power recruit them.

The Defense Department began to compile a priority list of high-risk personnel who should be evacuated. As of February, the Pentagon still hadn't shared the list with the State Department, the report says.

The Biden administration is aware of the danger.

"Afghans who possess the knowledge specific to security operations, intelligence collection, other aspects of security and defense forces that if it were to fall into terrorists' hands would pose a national security risk to the United States, those people will have a special category, I think there is just no way around it," a senior State Department official said, according to the report.

The White House labeled Mr. McCaul's report "partisan" and said the Trump administration should take the blame for difficulties in managing the evacuation. The U.S. committed to the withdrawal in an agreement signed with the Taliban in 2020.

"This agreement empowered the Taliban and weakened our partners in the Afghan government," Adrienne Watson, a spokesperson for the National Security Council, said in a memo rebutting the report.

Asked about Republican investigators' claims that the White House circumvented the chain of command to try to evacuate preferred people, a spokesperson suggested they were only conduits.

"The U.S. government received many requests from members of the public, including elected officials, journalists, and organizations with partners on the ground in Afghanistan, to assist individuals who were seeking to leave Afghanistan during" the evacuation, the spokesperson said. "We forwarded those along to the Afghan task force to ensure they were routed to the correct place to the team on the ground."

The report pinpoints one key bungle to a year ago, on Aug. 15, when the Taliban offered to let the U.S. run security of Kabul until the final withdrawal.

The offer has been reported before. Biden administration officials said they doubted the Taliban's sincerity and didn't want to commit up to 20,000 troops they estimated it would take.

"I did not consider that to be a formal offer. It was not the reason why I was there, so I did not pursue it," former Marine Corps Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr., who led U.S. Central Command until his retirement this year, told Congress last year.

Mr. McCaul's investigators gave evidence that the Taliban's offer was legitimate.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the special envoy to Afghanistan from 2018 until October, was in the Aug. 15 meeting where the offer was made. He thought it was legitimate. He said the Taliban told the Americans, "We want you to take it."

The report says the 20,000-troop estimate assumed a hostile Taliban. If the Taliban did want the U.S. to run security during those weeks, then the operation might have been conducted far more readily.

Adding to the situation, Gen. McKenzie Jr. told investigators, he intended to tell the Taliban at the Aug. 15 meeting to keep fighters outside Kabul. He said some fighters had already entered the capital by the time the meeting took place, so he ditched that approach.

The ramifications of giving up the city for the final two weeks of the pullout were severe, the committee concluded.

U.S. forces could have set up processing centers outside the limits of the airport and eliminated the chaos that cost lives and fouled the selection process for evacuation.

Having control of the city during the evacuation also could have headed off the suicide bombing at the airport.

"Think about what that would have changed," Mr. McCaul told CBS. "We had relied on the Taliban to secure the perimeter of HKIA. That led to the chaos. It also led to a suicide bomber that killed 13 service members — men and women — and injured over hundreds of people. And it could have been avoided."

Much of the report is based on an internal Pentagon review.

House investigators said they got hardly any cooperation from the State Department, which didn't make personnel available and gave only the most cursory answers to inquiries and document requests.

The report is labeled "interim."

Mr. McCaul and his team said they still hope to talk to the nearly three dozen State Department officials whose testimony they requested. If Republicans win control of the House in November, they could get more leeway to pursue the next part of their probe.

HEADLINE	08/14 Ex-Afghan leader defends decision to flee
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/year-afghan-leader-defends-role-taliban-takeover-88370064
GIST	<p>ISLAMABAD -- On the eve of the anniversary of the Taliban takeover of Kabul, Afghanistan's former president on Sunday defended what he said was a split-second decision to flee, saying he wanted to avoid the humiliation of surrender to the insurgents.</p> <p>Ashraf Ghani also told CNN that on the morning of Aug. 15, 2021, with the Taliban at the gates of the Afghan capital, he was the last one at the presidential palace after his guards had disappeared. He said the defense minister told him earlier that day that Kabul could not be defended.</p> <p>Ghani had previously sought to justify his actions on the day Kabul fell, but offered more details Sunday. He alleged that one of the cooks in the palace had been offered \$100,000 to poison him and that he felt his immediate environment was no longer safe.</p> <p>“The reason I left was because I did not want to give the Taliban and their supporters the pleasure of yet again humiliating an Afghan president and making him sign over the legitimacy of the government,” he said. “I have never been afraid.”</p> <p>Critics say Ghani’s sudden and secret departure Aug. 15 left the city rudderless as U.S. and NATO forces were in the final stages of their chaotic withdrawal from the country after 20 years.</p> <p>Ghani also denied persistent allegations that he took tens of millions of dollars in cash with him as he and other officials fled in helicopters.</p> <p>In a report issued last week, a Congressional watchdog said it's unlikely Ghani and his senior advisers transported that much cash on the escape helicopters.</p> <p>“The hurried nature of their departure, the emphasis on passengers over cargo, the payload and performance limitations of the helicopters, and the consistent alignment in detailed accounts from witnesses on the ground and in the air all suggest that there was little more than \$500,000 in cash on board the helicopters,” wrote the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which has tried to monitor the massive U.S. spending in the country over the years.</p> <p>The agency added that “it remains a strong possibility that significant amounts of U.S. currency disappeared from Afghan government property in the chaos of the Taliban takeover, including millions from the presidential palace” and the vault of the National Directorate of Security. However, the report said the watchdog was unable to determine how much money was stolen and by whom.</p> <p>In the end, the Taliban seized the capital without significant fighting last August, capping a weeks-long military blitz in which they rapidly captured provincial capitals without much resistance from the increasingly demoralized Afghan security forces.</p> <p>In the year since the takeover, the former insurgents have imposed significant restrictions on girls and women, limiting their access to education and work, despite initial promises to the contrary. The Taliban have remained internationally isolated and largely cut off from the flow of international aid enjoyed by the Ghani government. The Taliban have struggled to govern and halt the sharp economic decline that has pushed millions more Afghans into poverty and even hunger.</p> <p>Despite those challenges, the Taliban-led government planned several events Monday to mark the anniversary, including speeches by Taliban officials and several sports events.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 US: Al Qaeda not regrouped in Afghanistan
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/13/us/politics/al-qaeda-afghanistan.html

WASHINGTON — American spy agencies have concluded in a new intelligence assessment that Al Qaeda has not reconstituted its presence in Afghanistan since the U.S. withdrawal last August and that only a handful of longtime Qaeda members remain in the country.

The terror group does not have the ability to launch attacks from the country against the United States, the assessment said. Instead, it said, Al Qaeda will rely on, at least for now, an array of loyal affiliates outside the region to carry out potential terrorist plots against the West.

But several counterterrorism analysts said the spy agencies' judgments represented an optimistic snapshot of a complex and fast-moving terrorist landscape. The assessment, a declassified summary of which was provided to The New York Times, represents the consensus views of the U.S. intelligence agencies.

"The assessment is substantially accurate, but it's also the most positive outlook on a threat picture that is still quite fluid," said Edmund Fitton-Brown, a former top U.N. counterterrorism official.

The assessment was prepared after Ayman al-Zawahri, Al Qaeda's top leader, [was killed in a C.I.A. drone strike](#) in Kabul last month. The death of al-Zawahri, one of the world's most wanted terrorist leaders, after a decades-long manhunt was a major victory for President Biden, but it raised immediate questions about al-Zawahri's presence in Afghanistan a year after Mr. Biden withdrew all American forces, clearing the way for the Taliban to regain control of the country.

Republicans have said that the president's pullout has endangered the United States. The fact the Qaeda leader felt safe enough to return to the Afghan capital, they argue, was a sign of a failed policy that they predicted would allow Al Qaeda to rebuild training camps and plot attacks despite the Taliban's pledge to deny the group a safe haven. Last October, [a top Pentagon official](#) said Al Qaeda could be able to regroup in Afghanistan and attack the United States in one to two years.

Administration officials have pushed back on the most recent criticisms, noting a pledge Mr. Biden made when he announced al-Zawahri's death.

"As President Biden has said, we will continue to remain vigilant, along with our partners, to defend our nation and ensure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorism," Adrienne Watson, a spokeswoman for the White House's National Security Council, said in an email on Saturday.

Yet some outside counterterrorism specialists saw the new intelligence assessment as overly hopeful.

A [U.N. report warned this spring](#) that Al Qaeda had found "increased freedom of action" in Afghanistan since the Taliban seized power. The report noted that a number of Qaeda leaders were possibly living in Kabul and that the uptick in public statements by al-Zawahri suggested that he was able to lead more effectively after the Taliban seized power.

"This seems like an overly rosy assessment to the point of being slightly myopic," Colin P. Clarke, a counterterrorism analyst at the Soufan Group, a security consulting firm based in New York, said of the intelligence analysis. He added that the summary said "little about the longer-term prospects of Al Qaeda."

Al-Zawahri's death has once again cast a spotlight on Al Qaeda, which after Osama bin Laden's death in 2011 has largely been overshadowed by an upstart rival, the Islamic State. Many terrorism analysts said [Saif al-Adel](#), a senior Qaeda leader wanted by the F.B.I. in the bombings of two United States embassies in East Africa in 1998, was likely to succeed al-Zawahri. He is believed to be living in Iran.

"Basically, I find the I.C. assessment convincing," said Daniel Byman, a professor at Georgetown University, referring to the U.S. intelligence community and its new analysis of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Mr. Byman [has in the past voiced skepticism](#) about [a resurgent Qaeda threat](#).

But other counterterrorism experts disagreed. One point of dispute involved claims in the intelligence summary that Al Qaeda had not reconstituted its threat network in Afghanistan and that al-Zawahri was

the only major figure who sought to reestablish Al Qaeda's presence in the country when he and his family settled in Kabul this year.

"Zawahri was THE leader of Al Qaeda, so his being protected by the Taliban while he provided more active guidance to the group was in of itself reconstitution," Asfandiyar Mir, a senior expert at the United States Institute of Peace, wrote in an email.

"This approach fails to account for the group Al Qaeda is today and the fact that even a small number of core leaders can leverage Afghanistan to politically direct the group's affiliate network," Mr. Mir wrote. "Al Qaeda doesn't need large training camps to be dangerous."

Some counterterrorism experts also took issue with the government analysts' judgment that fewer than a dozen Qaeda members with longtime ties to the group are in Afghanistan, and that most of those members were likely there before the fall of the Afghan government last summer.

"Their numbers of active, hard-core Al Qaeda in AfPak make no sense," said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, referring to Afghanistan and Pakistan. "At least three dozen senior Qaeda commanders were freed from Afghan jails a year ago. I very much doubt they have turned to farming or accounting as their post-prison vocations."

Mr. Hoffman said that Qaeda operatives or their affiliates had been given important administrative responsibilities in at least eight Afghan provinces. He suggested the timing of the government assessment was "to deflect attention from the disastrous consequences of last year's shambolic withdrawal from Afghanistan."

The intelligence summary also said that members of the Qaeda affiliate in Afghanistan, formerly known as Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent, or AQIS, were largely inactive and focused mainly on activities like media production.

But a U.N. report in July estimated that the Qaeda affiliate had between 180 to 400 fighters — "primarily from Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Pakistan" — who were in several Taliban combat units.

"We know from a range of sources that AQIS participated in the Taliban's insurgency against the U.S. as well as operations against ISIS-K," Mr. Mir said, referring to the Islamic State's branch in Afghanistan, a bitter rival of Al Qaeda.

There was broad agreement on at least two main points in the intelligence summary, including that Al Qaeda does not yet have the ability to attack the United States or American interests aboard from Afghan soil.

The U.N. report in July [concurred with that judgment](#), explaining that Al Qaeda "is not viewed as posing an immediate international threat from its safe haven in Afghanistan because it lacks an external operational capability and does not currently wish to cause the Taliban international difficulty or embarrassment."

And government analysts as well as outside terrorism experts agreed that Al Qaeda in Afghanistan would, in the short term, most likely call upon a range of affiliates outside the region to carry out plots.

None of these affiliates pose the same kind of threat to the American homeland that Al Qaeda did on Sept. 11, 2001. But they are deadly and resilient. The Qaeda affiliate in East Africa killed three Americans at a U.S. base in Kenya in 2020. A Saudi Air Force officer training in Florida [killed three sailors and wounded eight other people in 2019](#). The officer acted on his own but was in contact with the Qaeda branch in Yemen as he completed his attack plans.

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SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/aug/13/female-protesters-beaten-by-taliban-fighters-during-rare-kabul-rally-afghanistan
GIST	<p>Taliban fighters beat female protesters and fired into the air on Saturday as they violently dispersed a rare rally in the Afghan capital, days before the first anniversary of the hardline Islamists' return to power.</p> <p>Since seizing control on 15 August last year, the Taliban have rolled back the marginal gains made by women during two decades of US intervention in Afghanistan.</p> <p>About 40 women – chanting “bread, work and freedom” – marched in front of the education ministry building in Kabul, before the fighters dispersed them by firing their guns into the air, an AFP correspondent reported.</p> <p>Some female protesters who took refuge in nearby shops were chased and beaten by Taliban fighters with their rifle butts.</p> <p>The demonstrators carried a banner which read “15 August is a black day” as they demanded rights to work and political participation.</p> <p>“Justice! Justice! We’re fed up with ignorance,” they chanted, many not wearing face veils.</p> <p>“Unfortunately, the Taliban from the intelligence service came and fired in the air,” said Zholia Parsi, one of the organisers of the march.</p> <p>“They dispersed the girls, tore our banners and confiscated the mobile phones of many girls.”</p> <p>But Munisa Mubariz vowed to continue fighting for women’s rights.</p> <p>“If the Taliban want to silence this voice, it’s not possible. We will protest from our homes,” she said.</p> <p>Some journalists covering the demonstration – the first women’s rally in months – were also beaten by the Taliban fighters, an AFP correspondent reported.</p> <p>While the Taliban authorities have allowed and promoted some rallies against the US, they have declined permission for any women’s rally since they returned to power.</p> <p>After seizing control last year, the Taliban promised a softer version of the harsh Islamist rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.</p> <p>But many restrictions have already been imposed, especially on women, to comply with the movement’s austere vision of Islam.</p> <p>Tens of thousands of girls have been shut out of secondary schools, while women have been barred from returning to many government jobs.</p> <p>Women have also been banned from travelling alone on long trips and can only visit public gardens and parks in the capital on days separate from men.</p> <p>In May, the country’s supreme leader and chief of the Taliban, Hibatullah Akhundzada, ordered women to fully cover themselves in public, including their faces – ideally with a burqa.</p> <p>Since the secondary school ban was announced in March, many secret schools for these girls have sprung up across several provinces.</p> <p>The UN and rights groups have repeatedly condemned the Taliban government for imposing the restrictions on women.</p>

These policies show a “pattern of absolute gender segregation and are aimed at making women invisible in the society”, Richard Bennett, the UN special rapporteur on human rights in Afghanistan, told reporters in Kabul during a visit in May.

On Thursday, Human Rights Watch called on the Taliban to “reverse their horrifying and misogynistic” decision to bar women from education.

“This would send a message that the Taliban are willing to reconsider their most egregious actions,” Fereshta Abbasi, an Afghanistan researcher at the rights group, said in a statement.

Some Afghan women initially pushed back against the curbs, holding small protests.

But the Taliban soon rounded up the ringleaders, holding them incommunicado while denying they had been detained.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Long road remains for Afghan refugees
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/us/afghanistan-refugees.html
GIST	<p>As a pilot in the Afghan Air Force, Abdul Wajed Ahadi conducted thousands of missions against Taliban strongholds. He made his final flight last year on Aug. 15, piloting his plane to Tajikistan to prevent it from falling into the hands of the insurgents who were surrounding Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital. He eventually made his way to safety in the United States.</p> <p>But he has spent much of the past year in a state of prolonged anxiety. His wife and three children are still in Afghanistan, where the economy has collapsed and the families of those who fought alongside the United States face possible reprisals from the Taliban.</p> <p>“I am all the time thinking about my children, my wife, my family — what will they eat, what will happen to them,” said Mr. Ahadi, 31, who shares a house in Vancouver, Wash., with three other pilots whose families are also in Afghanistan.</p> <p>It could be years before they are reunited. While fast-track permanent residency was offered to Cubans in the 1960s and Southeast Asians in the 1970s, a similar effort to help Afghan refugees settle permanently in the United States with their families has just been introduced in Congress, a first step.</p> <p>“Things are just limping along, and that is as far away as we can think of from meeting our moral obligation,” said Ryan Crocker, a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan.</p> <p>The Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and the tumultuous U.S. pullout a year ago spawned a new refugee crisis. More than 120,000 Afghans were airlifted and scattered around the world. Some 76,000, the biggest influx of wartime evacuees since the fall of Saigon in Vietnam, have reached the United States.</p> <p>Canada has committed to receiving 40,000 Afghans by 2024, with about 17,000 admitted so far. Germany, Britain and Norway are among the European nations that have also agreed to accept the refugees.</p> <p>But the Afghan exodus hit at a time when American refugee resettlement agencies had been sharply downsized under the Trump administration and the number of refugees accepted had plunged to historic lows; with millions of refugees fleeing Syria, the United States admitted only 76 Syrians in the 2018 fiscal year, along with 147 Iraqis.</p> <p>The Biden administration has pushed to reinvigorate refugee programs, but immigration experts caution that the resettlement of people seeking safe haven in the United States has always been a long game, and, if history is any guide, Afghans could be arriving in the country for years to come.</p> <p>About 130,000 Vietnamese were airlifted during the hasty U.S. withdrawal from Saigon in 1975, but by 1995 the country had taken in more than a million.</p>

“It’s impossible to save everybody, but there was a herculean effort over a 20-year period,” said Amanda C. Demmer, a historian at Virginia Tech who has studied U.S. relations with Vietnam since 1975. “The million-dollar question is, will the Afghan evacuation happen over 20 years?”

After spending about four months on military bases, Afghans have landed in every state but Wyoming, with the largest numbers in Texas, California and Virginia. But arrivals have slowed to a trickle since late February, when focus shifted to the war in Ukraine, and the overall resettlement process has been challenging.

“What makes Afghan evacuees unique is that they arrived without knowing where in the United States they would be resettled, unlike people admitted officially as refugees who walk off the plane with a clear pathway to a green card and a process to reunite with immediate family left behind,” said Mark Hetfield, president of HIAS, one of the nonprofits contracted to resettle Afghans.

The vast majority of Afghan refugees have been admitted on what is known as humanitarian parole, which gives them permission to live and work in the United States for two years; to remain permanently, and to bring family members over, they must apply for asylum, an arduous, yearslong process that requires a litany of documents to prove they would face persecution if returned to Afghanistan.

Yet legal paperwork is only the beginning. Many Afghans have found housing to be expensive, and sometimes scarce. Learning English, navigating public transportation and getting a driver’s license have been colossal challenges for many. Others have suffered from depression after being uprooted abruptly from their homeland, abandoning their homes and leaving behind loved ones.

Many members of the educated elite have had to take menial jobs.

Mohammed Amin, a former senior counterterrorism official whose family was resettled in Fayetteville, Ark., recently started working as a supervisor at a poultry plant. He worries that the \$3,700 a month he earns will not cover the rent and bills without the government assistance he received for food and living expenses before getting a job.

“Feeding a big family is much more difficult in the U.S.,” said Mr. Amin, whose seven children range in age from 3 months to 13 years. “But we are safe, and my six daughters will get an education.”

Finding affordable housing for big families has been especially challenging. And it is proving very difficult for women with many children at home to attend English classes.

Some families have settled in more easily. Mohammad bin Rahimi, a former guard at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, lived for four months with his wife and seven children in an 1850s-era log cabin in the countryside in Owensboro, Ky. But the family is now settled in a three-bedroom house. Mr. Rahimi is working at a chicken plant. His oldest daughter, Hernesa, 21, is employed at a uniform distributor. Both companies are providing English classes, and the school-age children are thriving. The family recently purchased a 2012 Chevrolet Equinox.

To create more success stories, the overwhelmed refugee system has raced to reopen offices closed under the Trump administration and to hire new staff. The government has enlisted ordinary Americans to relieve some pressure from resettlement agencies and complement their work.

In Los Angeles and other cities, small groups called “sponsor circles” have formed at synagogues and churches, each taking on an Afghan family to help find jobs and a place to live, enroll children in school, get to doctor’s appointments and complete other routine tasks until the family can manage alone.

“I don’t know how any refugee can do this without someone to help them navigate the systems,” said Francine Tansey, the circle lead for Temple Israel of Hollywood, which is sponsoring a family of three.

Students of the elementary school affiliated with the synagogue donated money to buy the family a 2011 Toyota Corolla to enable Ahmad, the head of household, to travel to work.

In San Antonio, a local Marriott resort held a job fair this year, in partnership with a resettlement agency, that attracted more than 100 Afghan applicants for 40 jobs that did not require English skills.

But those efforts are all directed at helping Afghans already in the United States. Much of the debate now is over how many others will be brought in.

In addition to family members of those already here, tens of thousands of other Afghans who supported the U.S. mission are still stranded in their home country or living in other countries. Among them are more than 74,000 people, and their families, who are in the pipeline for special immigrant visas, which offer a direct path to a green card for those who worked alongside American forces.

The Biden administration recently simplified the special immigrant visa application, but processing is still likely to take three years. About 250 to 300 people have been arriving to the United States each week — nearly all of them having applied for the visas even before the Taliban takeover.

“We can’t claim mission accomplished,” said Jennifer Quigley, senior director of government affairs at Human Rights First. “There are still too many vulnerable people abroad.”

Advocates are urging the United States to exercise the same humanitarian parole authority that it used for the evacuees airlifted a year ago to expedite the admission of vulnerable people still stranded in Afghanistan or in third countries. But the adjudication of applications has been sluggish, and denials extremely high. Of more than 48,900 requests, 369 had been approved as of July 28.

Refugees from the war in Ukraine have been offered an easier path: More than 100,000 have arrived in the United States in the five months since Russia invaded that country, 27,500 of them under a fast-track parole program established by the Biden administration in April.

“It’s working the way we wanted an Afghan parole program to,” Ms. Quigley said.

The administration has said that Ukrainians have been offered fast-track access because they are expected to return home once the war is over. But some refugee advocates see favoritism. “It’s hard for us not to think there is racial disparity taking place,” Ms. Quigley said.

Congress announced on Aug. 9 that it had introduced bipartisan legislation to streamline the process for bringing Afghans to the United States, the Afghan Adjustment Act. Advocates are pushing for the bill to be passed this year, but senior Republicans who oppose more immigration are likely to object, especially during an election year.

A year after the evacuation of Kabul, urgent new problems — rising gun violence, inflation, a growing outbreak of monkeypox — have diverted attention from the plight of those left behind after America’s longest war.

“You have one crisis after another, after another,” said Mr. Crocker, the former U.S. ambassador. “No one is thinking much about Afghanistan anymore. This administration would rather never hear the word Afghanistan again.”

On a recent day, several Afghan families now living in Northern Virginia attended a workshop sponsored by the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to fill out applications for permanent residency in the United States. They were among the minority of evacuated Afghans who had been approved for special immigrant visas before the frantic U.S. withdrawal.

	<p>Fatima, 34, whose husband worked in security at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, cannot read or write. So her husband, Sultan, had to complete the detailed forms for each member of their family of five, which took six hours, even with the help of pro bono lawyers.</p> <p>Fatima, who tried to calm her fussy 2-year-old twins in her lap, said it was worth it: Their four young daughters would have a better future in America.</p> <p>Nearly 3,000 miles away in Washington State, Mr. Ahadi, the pilot, lamented that the education back home of his 10-year-old daughter, Kainat, had been disrupted because his family had to constantly move to hide from the Taliban.</p> <p>“She is so upset that she cannot go to school,” he said.</p> <p>Mr. Ahadi said that he longed to put his flying skills to use in the United States. For now, he has been working the graveyard shift at a Frito-Lay warehouse and driving Uber part time to support his family in Afghanistan. They talk everyday.</p> <p>“Half of myself is there, back in Afghanistan,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Ohio man on FBI radar for months
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/us/ricky-shiffer-fbi-cincinnati.html
GIST	<p>COLUMBUS, Ohio — A man whom the police say they killed hours after he tried to breach the F.B.I.’s Cincinnati office had been on the radar of the federal authorities for months, two law enforcement officials said on Friday.</p> <p>The officials said federal investigators had been looking into whether the man, Ricky Shiffer, 42, of Columbus, had been involved in the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. They also said the F.B.I. had received a tip about Mr. Shiffer in May that was unrelated to Jan. 6, and agents opened a separate inquiry that included conducting interviews in Florida and Ohio.</p> <p>The F.B.I. acknowledged in a statement that it had received information about Mr. Shiffer before Thursday, but said that the information “did not contain a specific and credible threat.” The bureau said agents from multiple offices had tried to find and interview him, but had not been successful. A neighbor at an apartment complex in Columbus where Mr. Shiffer lived, who declined to give his name, said federal agents had visited the property a few weeks ago and had asked him questions about Mr. Shiffer, including what time he left home most days and when he returned.</p> <p>Law enforcement officials separately said they were investigating whether Mr. Shiffer appeared in a video posted on Facebook on Jan. 5, 2021, showing him attending a pro-Trump rally at Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington the night before the Capitol was stormed.</p> <p>The authorities said Mr. Shiffer, who was wearing body armor, tried to breach the entrance to the visitor screening facility of the bureau’s Cincinnati office on Thursday morning, but fled after an alarm was set off and agents responded. He was later spotted by a state trooper on a nearby interstate and chased into a rural area, where officers fatally shot him that afternoon after a lengthy standoff.</p> <p>State and federal officials said little publicly on Friday about the circumstances of the attack at the F.B.I. office or Mr. Shiffer’s motivations, even as online posts suggested he was a supporter of former President Donald J. Trump who had reacted with outrage when federal agents searched Mr. Trump’s Florida home earlier this week.</p> <p>A day after that search, someone with an account bearing Mr. Shiffer’s name posted messages on Mr. Trump’s social media platform, Truth Social, recommending that “patriots” go to Florida and kill federal agents. On Thursday, the same account also appeared to confess to an attack on the F.B.I.</p>

In a series of recent posts, the account had railed against law enforcement and issued a “call to arms,” saying that for two years, “They have been conditioning us to accept tyranny.” When someone asked whether he was proposing terrorism, the account responded: “I am proposing war.”

The New York Times could not immediately confirm whether the Truth Social account, or other social media accounts, belonged to Mr. Shiffer.

The attack in Ohio came during a week when many Republicans had criticized the F.B.I. for the search of Mr. Trump’s home, with some calling it a dangerous weaponization of the Justice Department. Some figures on the right also issued broader calls for violence and civil war.

On Thursday evening, Christopher A. Wray, the F.B.I. director, defended the bureau and decried attacks on law enforcement.

“Unfounded attacks on the integrity of the F.B.I. erode respect for the rule of law and are a grave disservice to the men and women who sacrifice so much to protect others,” Mr. Wray said. “Violence and threats against law enforcement, including the F.B.I., are dangerous and should be deeply concerning to all Americans.”

Mr. Shiffer had served in the U.S. Navy and the Florida Army National Guard as a younger man, military records showed, and had worked as an electrician in Ohio more recently, according to his former company. Online records suggested that Mr. Shiffer had ties to several other states, including Nebraska, but it was not clear when or how long he had lived there. In 2016, he made a \$250 contribution to Mr. Trump, according to federal elections records.

Federal investigators said they were scrutinizing Mr. Shiffer’s social media accounts. On Tuesday, a Truth Social account in the name of @rickywshifferjr posted a message encouraging people to go to Florida, where, as he wrote, “Mar A Lago is.”

“I recommend going, and being Florida, I think the feds won’t break it up,” the message read. “IF they do, kill them.”

Though the Ohio State Highway Patrol provided a detailed account of the police chase and standoff on Thursday, in which Mr. Shiffer and officers traded gunfire, the authorities provided limited details about the assault on the F.B.I. building that set off those events, and the possible motivations for it.

No one other than Mr. Shiffer was injured or killed on Thursday.

Officials with the Highway Patrol and the F.B.I.’s Cincinnati office said they had no plans to release additional information on Friday. A spokeswoman for the Ohio Attorney General’s Office said the state’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation was investigating the use of force by state troopers, but she did not answer other questions about the case or indicate when more information would be released.

A spokeswoman for Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, declined to comment.

There was similar quiet from many in the Biden administration. When Attorney General Merrick B. Garland spoke Thursday about the search at Mr. Trump’s home, he did not mention the attack in Ohio.

A handful of officials directly condemned the assault, including Representative Brad Wenstrup, a Republican whose district includes the F.B.I.’s Cincinnati office, who called it “despicable and wrong,” and Representative Mike Carey, a Republican whose district includes the site of the standoff. “In America,” Mr. Carey said on Friday, “we do not threaten or take violent action against law enforcement.”

Earlier in the week, Mr. Carey had called the search at Mr. Trump’s home “a danger to the Republic” that he said eroded faith in the Justice Department.

	<p>Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio, a Democrat, called what happened in Cincinnati “an appalling attack on law enforcement.”</p> <p>“We live in a country of laws,” Mr. Brown said in a statement, “and it’s the duty of all leaders to calm — not stoke — political violence and extremism.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Taliban rewind the clock: women powerless
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article
GIST	<p>KABUL, Afghanistan — Girls are barred from secondary schools and women from traveling any significant distance without a male relative. Men in government offices are told to grow beards, wear traditional Afghan clothes and prayer caps, and stop work for prayers.</p> <p>Music is officially banned, and foreign news broadcasts, TV shows and movies have been removed from public airwaves. At checkpoints along the streets, morality police chastise women who are not covered from head to toe in all-concealing burqas and headpieces in public.</p> <p>A year into Taliban rule, Afghanistan has seemed to hurtle backward in time. The country’s new rulers, triumphant after two decades of insurgency, have reinstituted an emirate governed by a strict interpretation of Islamic law and issued a flood of edicts curtailing women’s rights, institutionalizing patriarchal customs, restricting journalists and effectively erasing many vestiges of an American-led occupation and nation-building effort.</p> <p>For many Afghans — particularly women in cities — the sense of loss has been devastating. Before the Taliban seized power, some young people realized ambitions of becoming doctors, lawyers and government officials, and explored international opportunities, as well.</p> <p>“Now it’s gone — all of it,” said Zakia Zahadat, 24, who used to work in a government ministry after she earned a college degree. She is mostly confined to home these days, she said. “We have lost the power to choose what we want.”</p> <p>To enforce their decrees and stamp out dissent, the new Taliban government has employed police state tactics like door-to-door searches and arbitrary arrests — drawing widespread condemnation from international human rights monitors. Those tactics have instilled an undercurrent of fear in the lives of those who oppose their rule, and have cut off the country from millions in development aid and foreign assistance as it slips again into pariah state status.</p> <p>That international isolation is exacerbating an economic and humanitarian crisis that has engulfed the country since the Western-backed government collapsed last year, and the country’s alienation is likely to deepen, since American officials accused the Taliban of harboring the leader of Al Qaeda this month.</p> <p>Millions became unemployed after jobs with foreign embassies, militaries and NGOs vanished practically overnight, malnourished children have flooded Kabul’s hospitals in recent months and more than half the population faces life-threatening food insecurity, according to the United Nations.</p> <p>In one way, however, the country has been better off: It is largely at peace, after decades of war that tore families apart and left no corner of Afghanistan untouched.</p> <p>When Western troops withdrew last year and the war ended, so did a scourge that claimed tens of thousands of Afghan civilian lives. Gone were the American raids and airstrikes, the crossfire between the Afghan security forces and the insurgents, and the indiscriminate Taliban roadside bombs and devastating suicide attacks.</p>

The relative calm has offered a welcomed respite for Afghans living rural areas, particularly in the south, whose lives were upended by fighting over the past two decades.

So far, the Taliban have also avoided returning to the brutal public spectacles of flogging, amputations and mass executions that marked their first rule in the 1990s and widely turned international opinion against their rule.

But the Taliban's restrictions, and the economic collapse that accelerated after they seized control of the country in August 2021, have had an outsized effect on the capital, Kabul, where the long occupation by Western forces had profoundly affected day-to-day life in the city.

Before the Taliban seized power, men and women picnicked together in parks on weekends and chatted over cappuccinos in its coffee shops. Girls in knee-length dresses and jeans tore around skate parks and built robots in after school programs. Clean-shaven men wore Western suits to work in government offices, where women held some high-ranking positions.

Over the past two decades, Western donors touted many of those facets of life as signal achievements of their intervention. Now the Taliban's vision for the country is once again reshaping the social fabric.

Thousands of women who served as lawyers, judges, soldiers and police officers are no longer at their posts. Most working women have been restricted to jobs in education or health care, serving fellow women.

The Taliban's scrubbing of women from public spaces today feels like being jerked back in time, many say, as if the lives they built over the past 20 years seem to disappear more with each passing day.

Marghalai Faqirzai, 44, came of age during the first Taliban government. She married at 17 and spent most of her time at home. "Women didn't even know they had rights then," she said.

But in recent years, Ms. Faqirzai earned a university degree, attending school alongside one of her daughters. Another daughter, Marwa Quraishi, 23, attended a university and worked in a government ministry before she was fired by the Taliban last summer.

"I always assumed my life would be better than my mother's," Ms. Quraishi said. "But now I see that life will actually get much worse for me, for her — for all us."

With the restrictions on women, crackdown on freedom of expression and policymaking in the Taliban's interim government confined to a select few men and religious scholars, most Afghans have lost any hope of having a hand in molding the future of their country.

"Many people have lost their sense of safety, their ability to express themselves," said Heather Barr, associate director of the Women's Rights Division at Human Rights Watch. "They've lost their voice — any feeling that they could be part of building a country that looks the way they want it to."

Before the Western government collapsed last year, Fereshta Alyar, 18, had been in 12th grade and preparing to take the national university entrance exam. Every day she spent her mornings doing homework, went to school and to an after-school math program in the afternoons, then returned home to study more.

For months after the Taliban seized power and closed girls' secondary schools indefinitely, she fell into a deep depression — the seemingly endless possibilities for her future vanished in an instant. Now she spends her days at home, trying to muster the willpower to study her old English language textbooks alone. Like many of her old classmates, Ms. Ayar survives on the hope of one day leaving the country, she says.

The Taliban insist that they have deep public support for these changes. The Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention, which has issued the decrees, says that the edicts have helped restore Afghanistan's traditional status as a strictly observant Islamic nation.

"All these decrees are for the protection of women, not the oppression of women," Mohammad Sadiq Akif, the spokesman for the ministry, said in an interview.

Asked about the women's travel decree, Mr. Akif, 33, responded: "A woman is a helpless and powerless creature. If a woman goes on a journey alone, during the journey she could face a problem that she cannot solve by herself." He said long-haul buses and taxis had been instructed not to transport women traveling alone.

Music had been banned, Mr. Akif said, "because our Prophet says listening to music develops hypocrisy in the human heart." Foreign news reports and entertainment programs "turned people against Afghan culture," Mr. Akif said.

Men may only visit parks on days reserved for men, he said, because "a man who goes to a park with his family may look at other women in the park, which is not a good thing."

The Taliban's initial pledge to open secondary schools for girls nationwide had been viewed by the international community as an important indicator of the Taliban government's willingness to moderate. When the group's top religious ideologues reneged on that promise in March, many Western donors halted plans to invest in long-term development programs, aid workers say.

"Among the donor community there is a talk about before March and after March," said Abdallah Al Dardari, the United Nations Development Program's resident representative in Afghanistan.

In rural areas, where conservative, patriarchal social customs have dominated life for decades, many Afghans chafed under the American-backed government, which was stained by corruption and often incapable of providing public services or security.

And there is little doubt that the sense of constant peril that dominated the country both in its cities and the countryside through 20 years of war has eased.

"Now I can walk freely, the change is like the difference between the ground and the sky to me," said Mohammad Ashraf Khan, 50, a resident of Zari district of Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan.

For most of the past two decades, Mr. Khan was unable to escape the brutality of the war. His 27-year-old grandson was killed on his farm after soldiers with the former government mistook him for a Talib fighter, he said. His 17-year-old nephew was killed by a roadside bomb. The gas station he owned once burned down after fighting broke out on the highway beside it.

Now he can drive for hours down the road to Kandahar city, free of the fear that he could be killed in a sudden flash of fighting. His modest income has been slashed by more than 70 percent with the economic downturn, he said, but that matters less to him than the freedom that came with the end of the war.

"I'm just happy the fighting is over," he said.

But for many Afghans, the sudden economic collapse, soaring food prices and rampant unemployment have been devastating.

One recent morning in the village of Alisha, a cluster of mud brick homes tucked into the mountains of Wardak Province, dozens of mothers and rail-thin children gathered outside a home serving as a temporary clinic.

Lahorah, 30, arrived early that morning, her 1-year-old son, Safiullah, tucked beneath the folds of her long, cotton scarf. Before the Taliban seized power, her husband worked as a laborer, building people's homes or cultivating their farms. He earned a few dollars a day — a meager living, but enough to put food on the table, she said.

But after the economy crashed last year, the work dried up. Her family survived the winter on stores of food they had saved. When those ran out this spring, her neighbors and relatives in the village offered what they could to her and her five children. But now, even they do not have any food left to share.

"I have never in my life experienced such difficulties as we have now," she said.

Across major cities, informal markets hawking desperate people's household belongings have taken over entire streets. Makeshift stalls are packed with shiny blue and pink curtains, flimsy wardrobes, TVs, refrigerators and multiple piles of red Afghan rugs.

Sitting in his stall in Kabul one recent afternoon, one vendor, Mohammad Nasir thumbed a string of red prayer beads in his hand, musing on the city's seemingly sudden economic decline.

Earlier that day a mother had come with her two young sons, who were crying for food, to bring Mohammad a rug to sell. But even more heartbreaking was what he saw during his commute home earlier that week, he said.

"Beside a river, someone was throwing away stale bread, and people were there collecting the stale bread to eat," he said. "I'm 79 years old and I have never seen such a thing in Kabul."

"Even under the previous regime of the Taliban — people were hungry, but I didn't see that," he added.

Across the country, the Taliban's crackdown on dissent has injected a different kind of stress. Armed Taliban intelligence and security agents show up unannounced at people's homes to rifle through them, and search their phones at checkpoints across the city.

Journalists have been detained, beaten, jailed and subjected to media guidelines warning them not to "contradict Islamic values" or report "against national interests" — effectively gutting the robust, independent Afghan news media sector that had developed over the past 20 years.

Small protests of women's activists have been broken up violently as the Taliban seek to stamp out any show of dissent.

Many vaguely worded decrees have led to confusion among residents and harsh enforcement by the morality police tasked with interpreting them.

Nasrin Hamed, 49, said she was accosted by a gun-toting enforcer from the Virtue and Vice ministry while riding in a minibus in Kabul. She was wearing modest and concealing clothes, she said, but her face was uncovered — a new degree of infraction under Taliban rule. She said the Talib screamed at her, questioning whether she was truly a Muslim.

"He shouted at me: 'If you are going to dress like this, you have to leave the country,' " she said.

Still, some Afghans in the city are determined to push back against the welter of Taliban decrees on daily life. After female TV presenters were ordered to cover their faces on the air, the staff of Tolonews — men and women — wore black masks on the air and posted photos of themselves on social media with the comment: "We are in a deep grief today."

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HEADLINE	08/12 The tumultuous summer changed the world
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/12/world/asia/afghanistan-collapse-photo.html

GIST	<p>In Afghanistan, August 2021 began ominously.</p> <p>The Americans and their allies were leaving the country, finally ending their long war after striking an agreement with the Taliban, and leaving the country's defense to the security forces they had trained and supplied for years. But the Afghan forces were already beginning to buckle. By the end of the summer, the insurgents had seized dozens of districts, rapidly sweeping across the countryside as outpost after outpost folded.</p> <p>But none of the 34 provincial capitals had fallen. Yet.</p> <p>The United States was providing limited air support to the beleaguered Afghan forces below and there remained a small hope that the U.S.-sponsored firepower would continue after the United States withdrew completely. President Ashraf Ghani had reshuffled his military leadership, and militia units led by the powerful and notorious warlords of Afghanistan's past had taken up arms to defend their economic fiefs.</p> <p>Then, on Aug. 6, Zaranj, the capital of Nimroz Province on the border with Iran, suddenly fell to the Taliban. Like dominoes, other provincial capital cities began toppling as well, even in places like Kandahar where the Afghan forces had defended well for months.</p> <p>By the morning of Aug. 15, the Taliban had practically encircled Kabul, the country's capital, and thousands of U.S. troops had landed to evacuate the American Embassy.</p> <p>By the end of the day, the Western-backed government, including Mr. Ghani, had fled, and the American flag over the embassy had been taken down. What would become crowds of tens of thousands of Afghans began forming at the gates of the international airport, fearful of what their new Taliban rulers would do.</p> <p>Others, though, were relieved, grateful that a violent siege of the city, much like what had happened during the civil war of the 1990s, had been avoided. When the insurgent group entered Kabul, some city neighborhoods celebrated their arrival.</p> <p>Instead, the violence centered around the airport, as the crowds surged toward the gates, wedged between the rifle butts of the Taliban — desperate to establish security in the sprawling capital of around five million people — and the rifle barrels of the Americans defending the gates.</p> <p>By the month's end, tens of thousands of Afghans had been evacuated from Kabul to countries all over the world. The last American cargo jets had departed, leaving behind blowing trash and celebratory Taliban gunfire. Thirteen Americans and nearly 200 Afghans were killed in an Islamic State suicide bomb blast, and soon after the U.S. responded by errantly killing 10 civilians in an airstrike intended to punish ISIS.</p> <p>The ending to the long American war in Afghanistan had been short and violent, and now a new chapter of Taliban rule was opening, as the group tried to suddenly shift from a guerrilla insurgency into a government for around 40 million Afghans.</p> <p>Now, we have seen that the Taliban have, in fact, returned to many of the repressive and hard-line ways that characterized their regime in the 1990s. But as the summer ended last year, nothing was clear except that the world had changed, in just a blink.</p>
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Suspicious, Unusual

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HEADLINE	08/13 Seattle traffic tickets down, better driving?
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/data/seattle-traffic-violations-are-down-are-we-driving-better/
GIST	Have you noticed a recent change for the better among Seattle drivers — less speeding, running red lights and texting behind the wheel?

Me neither.

So something else must be going on to explain this: From 2019 to 2021, the number of traffic infractions issued by Seattle police dropped by 68%. Data from Seattle Municipal Court shows the number of infractions totaled nearly 28,000 in 2019. That fell to about 14,500 in 2020 and then to only 9,000 last year.

And the numbers are still going down. Through June of this year, there have only been about 1,800 infractions, which is one-third the number issued through June 2021.

A decline in driving during the pandemic surely played a role. [Seattle Department of Transportation data](#) shows a 36% drop in average daily traffic volumes on Seattle streets and bridges from 2019 to 2020. The data for 2021 is not available yet, although [increased levels of congestion](#) last year suggest that volume has bounced back to some degree.

According to Seattle Police Department spokesperson Patrick Michaud, it's also largely a matter of the department having to allocate limited resources.

"Our department has made no secret of our dangerously low staffing levels," he said in an email. The department is prioritizing resources on "high-harm and violent crime cases, like domestic violence," he said.

As of August 2022, SPD's Traffic Enforcement Unit consists solely of 12 motorcycle officers and three sergeants, which is greatly reduced from 2019 staffing levels when there were 21 officers and three sergeants assigned to the motorcycle unit and 15 officers and two sergeants assigned to traffic cars.

But does a lack of traffic enforcement embolden some drivers to break laws, and does that in turn make the city's streets more dangerous for everyone — motorists, pedestrians and cyclists alike?

It's a difficult question to answer, but this much is true: The city's goal of eliminating traffic deaths, called "Vision Zero," took a hit in 2021. As The Seattle Times reported in June, [last year was the deadliest in terms of traffic-related fatalities in more than a decade](#). Thirty people were killed on Seattle streets. And 2022 is also shaping up to be [a bad year for traffic-related injuries and deaths](#).

Nearly all types of traffic violations have declined in number. (Note: DUIs are considered criminal cases and are not included among traffic infractions.) Data from Seattle Municipal Court shows that of the 15 most common traffic violations cited in 2021, 14 had dropped in number by at least 40% from 2019.

The most common violation — driving without insurance — was down 63%. Disobeying a traffic-control device (such as traffic signals, street signs and markings) violations fell by 64%. Inattentive driving was down 73%.

The one violation among the top 15 that increased from 2019 to 2021 was speeding 1-5 mph over the limit in a 40 mph and under zone. According to SPD senior communications manager Jonah Spangenthal-Lee, this increase was largely due to the city adding 2,500 new 25 mph speed limit signs along 415 miles of arterial streets in recent years.

These numbers do not include traffic camera violations, which have trended in the opposite direction. In 2021, about 190,500 Seattle motorists were nabbed by a camera, up from 93,000 in 2019. At least some of this spike is due to cameras being installed in additional locations. For example, in 2021, cameras were installed on the West Seattle low bridge to enforce restricted lane access. Cameras are also used to enforce red-light violations as well as speed limits in school zones, transit lane violations, and "blocking the box."

	<p>This increased reliance on camera-based traffic enforcement has some advantages. It requires less of SPD's limited personnel resources. Cameras also reduce the possibility of police officer bias, including the issue of racial profiling.</p> <p>But cameras can only enforce certain types of violations — and even then, only where the cameras are installed.</p> <p>And it's important to note that even though they're reduced, SPD's traffic operations continue. The department typically focuses on high-traffic arterials and areas where there have been complaints from the community. For example, an enforcement emphasis on Rainier Avenue South in June resulted in 43 citations for various violations, according to SPD.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Germany ecological catastrophe Oder River
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/german-minister-decries-ecological-catastrophe-oder-river-88371255
GIST	<p>WARSAW, Poland -- Germany's environment minister said the mass die-off of fish in the Oder River is an ecological catastrophe and it isn't clear yet how long it will take the river to recover.</p> <p>Steffi Lemke spoke Sunday at a news conference alongside her Polish counterpart, Anna Moskwa, after a meeting in Szczecin, a Polish city on the Oder River.</p> <p>The Oder runs from Czechia to the border between Poland and Germany before flowing into the Baltic Sea. Ten tons of dead fish were removed from it last week, but Moskwa said the cause of the mass die-off still has not yet been determined.</p> <p>"So far, at least 150 samples of water from the Oder River have been tested. None of the studies have confirmed the presence of toxic substances. At the same time, we are testing fish. No mercury or other heavy metals have been found in them," she said.</p> <p>She said some Oder water samples were being sent to foreign laboratories to be tested for about 300 substances.</p> <p>Both ministers said they were focused now on doing what they can to limit the damage to the river's ecosystem.</p> <p>Lemke suggested that German authorities were not alerted quickly enough after dead fish were detected in Poland and said communications between the two countries should be improved.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Europe rivers' dry; worst drought 500yrs?
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/aug/13/europes-rivers-run-dry-as-scientists-warn-drought-could-be-worst-in-500-years
GIST	<p>In places, the Loire can now be crossed on foot; France's longest river has never flowed so slowly. The Rhine is fast becoming impassable to barge traffic. In Italy, the Po is 2 metres lower than normal, crippling crops. Serbia is dredging the Danube.</p> <p>Across Europe, drought is reducing once-mighty rivers to trickles, with potentially dramatic consequences for industry, freight, energy and food production – just as supply shortages and price rises due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine bite.</p> <p>Driven by climate breakdown, an unusually dry winter and spring followed by record-breaking summer temperatures and repeated heatwaves have left Europe's essential waterways under-replenished and, increasingly, overheated.</p>

With no significant rainfall recorded for almost two months across western, central and southern Europe and none forecast in the near future, meteorologists say the drought could become the continent's worst in more than 500 years.

"We haven't analysed fully this year's event because it is still ongoing," [said Andrea Toreti](#) of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. "There were no other events in the past 500 [years] similar to the drought of 2018. But this year, I think, is worse."

He said there was "a very high risk of dry conditions" continuing over the next three months, adding that without effective mitigation drought intensity and frequency would "increase dramatically over Europe, both in the north and in the south".

Germany's Federal Institute of Hydrology (BfG) said the level of the Rhine, whose waters are used for freight transport, irrigation, manufacturing, power generation and drinking, will continue dropping until at least the beginning of next week.

On Friday the water at the critical Kaub marker 50km downstream from Mainz – which measures navigability, rather than the water depth – fell below 40cm, the level at which many shipping firms consider it is no longer economical for barges to operate. It could fall to nearer 30cm over the next few days, the BfG has said.

Many barges, which carry coal for power plants and vital raw materials for industrial giants such as steelmaker Thyssen and chemical giant BASF, are already operating at about 25% capacity to reduce their draft, raising shipping costs up to fivefold.

A vital part of northwest Europe's economy for centuries, the 760 miles (1,233km) of the Rhine flow from Switzerland through Germany's industrial heartland before reaching the North Sea at the megaport of Rotterdam.

A total halt in Rhine barge traffic would hit Germany's – and Europe's – economy hard: experts have calculated that a six-month suspension in 2018 cost around €5bn (£4.2bn), with low water levels forecast to cost Germany 0.2 points of economic growth this year.

While the EU has said boosting waterborne freight by 25% is one of the bloc's green transition priorities, Germany is now working to divert it to rail and road – although between 40 and 100 trucks are needed to replace a standard barge load.

France's rivers might not be such key freight arteries, but they do serve to cool the nuclear plants that produce 70% of the country's electricity. As prices hit all-time highs, power giant EDF has been forced to reduce [output because of the drought](#).

Strict rules regulate how far nuclear plants can raise river temperatures when they discharge cooling water – and if record low water levels and high air temperatures mean the river is already overheated, they have no option but to cut output. With Europe's looming energy crisis mounting and the Garonne, Rhône and Loire rivers already too warm to allow cooling water to be discharged, the French nuclear regulator last week allowed five plants to temporarily break the rules.

In Italy, the flow of the [parched Po](#), Italy's longest river, has fallen to one-tenth of its usual rate, and water levels are 2 metres below normal. With no sustained rainfall in the region since November, corn and risotto rice production have been hard hit.

The Po valley accounts for between 30% and 40% of Italy's agricultural production, but rice growers in particular have warned that up to [60% of their crop](#) may be lost as paddy fields dry out and are spoiled by seawater sucked in by the low river level.

	<p>In the protected wetlands of the river's delta, near Venice, its high temperature and sluggish flow have reduced the water's oxygen content to the extent that an estimated 30% of clams growing in the lagoon have already been killed off.</p> <p>Low river levels and high water temperatures can prove fatal to many species. In Bavaria, the Danube reached 25C last week and could hit 26.5C by mid-month, meaning its oxygen content would fall below six parts per million – fatal for trout.</p> <p>Freight on the 2,850km of the Danube has also been heavily disrupted, prompting authorities in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria to start dredging deeper channels while barges carrying mainly fuel for the power generators wait to advance.</p> <p>Even Norway, which relies on hydropower for about 90% of its electricity generation, has said the unusually low levels of its reservoirs may ultimately oblige it to limit power exports.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 New record for overnight warmth
SOURCE	https://www.king5.com/article/news/nation-world/record-overnight-temperatures/507-3f4b516d-2349-4b47-ac9c-e31fef327ab3
GIST	<p>NEW YORK — Talk about hot nights, America got some for the history books last month.</p> <p>The continental United States in July set a record for overnight warmth, providing little relief from the day's sizzling heat for people, animals, plants and the electric grid, meteorologists said.</p> <p>The average low temperature for the Lower 48 states in July was 63.6 degrees (17.6 Celsius), which beat the previous record set in 2011 by a few hundredths of a degree. The mark is not only the hottest nightly average for July, but for any month in 128 years of record keeping, said National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration climatologist Karin Gleason. July's nighttime low was more than 3 degrees (5.4 Celsius) warmer than the 20th century average.</p> <p>Scientists have long talked about nighttime temperatures -- reflected in increasingly hotter minimum readings that usually occur after sunset and before sunrise -- being crucial to health.</p> <p>"When you have daytime temperatures that are at or near record high temperatures and you don't have that recovery overnight with temperatures cooling off, it does place a lot of stress on plants, on animals and on humans," Gleason said Friday. "It's a big deal."</p> <p>In Texas, where the monthly daytime average high was over 100 degrees (37.8 Celsius) for the first time in July and the electrical grid was stressed, the average nighttime temperature was a still toasty 74.3 degrees (23.5 Celsius) — 4 degrees (7.2 Celsius) above the 20th century average.</p> <p>In the past 30 years, the nighttime low in the U.S. has warmed on average about 2.1 degrees (3.8 Celsius), while daytime high temperatures have gone up 1.9 degrees (3.4 Celsius) at the same time. For decades climate scientists have said global warming from the burning of coal, oil and natural gas would make the world warm faster at night and in the northern polar regions. A study earlier this week said the Arctic is now warming four times faster than the rest of the globe.</p> <p>Nighttime warms faster because daytime warming helps make the air hold more moisture than that moisture helps trap the heat in at night, Gleason said.</p> <p>"So it is in theory expected and it's also something we're seeing happen in the data," Gleason said.</p> <p>NOAA on Friday also released its global temperature data for July, showing it was on average the sixth hottest month on record with an average temperature of 61.97 degrees (16.67 degrees Celsius), which is</p>

	1.57 degrees (0.87 degrees Celsius) warmer than the 20th century average. It was a month of heat waves, including the United Kingdom breaking its all-time heat record.
	"Global warming is continuing on pace," Colorado meteorologist Bob Henson said.
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Crime, Criminals

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HEADLINE	08/12 Shootings soar, Philadelphia awash in guns
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/nation-world/everybody-is-armed-as-shootings-soar-philadelphia-is-awash-in-guns/
GIST	<p>PHILADELPHIA — The 300th killing of the year in Philadelphia took the life of Lameer Boyd, an 18-year-old father-to-be who was gunned down one July night on a sidewalk. Over the weeks that followed, a grandmother was shot in the neck, a popular singer was killed in front of his house and a woman was killed at a front-porch cookout.</p> <p>With her death, the 322nd of the year, the number of homicides in Philadelphia was on track toward becoming the highest in police records, passing the bleak milestone set just last year. So far this year, more than 1,400 people in the city have been shot, hundreds of them fatally, a higher toll than in the much larger cities of New York or Los Angeles. Alarms have sounded about gun violence across the country over the past two years, but Philadelphia is one of the few major American cities where it truly is as bad as it has ever been.</p> <p>The crisis is all the more harrowing for having been so concentrated in certain neighborhoods in North and West Philadelphia, places that were left behind decades ago by redlining and other forms of discrimination and are now among the poorest parts of what is often called the country's poorest big city. Violence has erupted at times in other areas of Philadelphia, including a mass shooting in June on a street packed with bar and restaurant traffic. But much of the gunfire has rung out on blocks of blighted rowhouses, vacant lots and iron-caged front porches.</p> <p>The city government has rolled out an array of efforts to address the crisis, including grants for community groups, violence intervention programs and earlier curfews. But on one crucial matter, there seem to be no ready answers: what to do about all the guns. "Everybody is armed," said Jonathan Wilson, director of the Fathership Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Southwest Philadelphia that has been helping to conduct a multicity survey of young people's attitudes about gun culture. "Nobody's without a gun in these ZIP codes, because they've always been dangerous."</p> <p>In a recent news conference, Mayor Jim Kenney lamented that the authorities "keep taking guns off the street, and they're simultaneously replaced almost immediately." In fact, the problem is more drastic than that, according to a city report earlier this year. For every illegal gun seized by the police in Philadelphia between 1999 and 2019, about three more guns were bought or sold legally — and that was before a recent boom in gun ownership.</p> <p>In Philadelphia over the past two years, as all around the country, the pace of legal gun sales surged, roughly doubling during the pandemic years. The number of firearm licenses issued in the city jumped to more than 52,000 in 2021, from around 7,400 in 2020.</p> <p>None of these figures include the apparently flourishing market in illegal guns. Over the past two years, reports of stolen guns have spiked, major gun-trafficking pipelines have been uncovered and, according to police, many more guns have been found that were illegally converted into fully automatic weapons.</p> <p>The city has sued the gun-friendly state legislature for preempting its authority to enact stronger local gun laws, such as reporting requirements for lost or stolen guns. And officials in Philadelphia have publicly</p>

quarreled among themselves about enforcement of the laws on the books. In July, after two police officers were shot at a Fourth of July celebration, some City Council leaders even suggested returning to a police tactic that many people had come to see as the shame of an earlier era: stop-and-frisk.

“There are a lot of citizens in the streets of the city of Philadelphia that talk about, ‘When are we going to look at stop-and-frisk in a constitutional and active way?’” Darrell L. Clarke, the council president, said at a news conference. “Those are conversations that people have to have.”

Given a consent decree that requires the monitoring of police stops, as well as opposition from other city leaders and a dearth of evidence that the practice ever worked, the old days of stop-and-frisk, when the police conducted thousands of street searches that overwhelmingly targeted Black Philadelphians, are unlikely to return. But broaching the subject at all revealed the depths of official exasperation.

Some of the frustration has been directed at the district attorney, Larry Krasner, whose approach to criminal justice has drawn criticism from the mayor, ire from the police union and a threat of impeachment from Republican state lawmakers.

Krasner, one of the most prominent progressive prosecutors in the country, has long argued that putting a major focus on the arrest and incarceration of people caught carrying firearms without a permit is not only ineffectual but counterproductive, because it diverts police energy and resources from solving violent crime and alienates people whom investigators need as sources and witnesses.

“You can make massive numbers of gun arrests, and you do not see significant reductions in shooting,” he said.

There were no arrests in three-quarters of last year’s fatal shootings, according to statistics provided by Krasner’s office, even as arrests for illegal guns soared to record levels.

Only a small fraction of the people who are arrested for carrying guns without permits are the ones actually driving the violence, Krasner said. He insisted that the city needed to focus instead on people who had already proven themselves to be dangerous, and to invest in advanced forensic technology to clear the hundreds of unsolved shootings.

“What is their theory — that rather than go vigorously after the people who actually shoot the gun,” Krasner asked, “that we should take 100 people and put them in jail, because one of them might shoot somebody?”

Some city officials, including the police chief, see things differently.

“I think there are some philosophical differences between us,” Police Commissioner Danielle M. Outlaw said. She said she advocated “a both-and, not an either-or” approach. This year, the police created a special unit dedicated to investigating nonfatal shootings, with four dozen detectives and other officers working on cases across the city. But the commissioner insisted that the police were just as committed to cracking down on illegal gun possession as well.

“There have to be consequences for those who are carrying and using these guns illegally,” Outlaw said. “If I go out and get this gun, knowing nothing’s going to happen to me, why would that preclude me from doing anything else illegally with a gun?” For those who live in the crisis every day, these questions are visceral.

Marguerite Ruff is a special education classroom assistant at an elementary school in Philadelphia. On a Saturday morning seven years ago, her youngest son, Justin, 23, was shot to death in the street.

There should be stiffer penalties for carrying guns illegally, Ruff said recently. But she added that it probably would not make any difference. “They think they can get away with it, because they’re young,” she said.

Some years ago, “a thinking person” would not carry a gun on the streets of Philadelphia, Ruff said, “but now you can’t even step out of your house, can’t go to your car, you can’t drive to the corner.” She did not like that so many people carried guns, she said, but “in a way, I can understand it.”

At the North Philadelphia headquarters of NOMO, a nonprofit for at-risk youth in the city, a few dozen young people — boys and girls, 11 to 17 — had gathered on a sweltering summer afternoon. Rickey Duncan, the organization’s CEO, asked for a show of hands: How many felt endangered on a daily basis? A large majority raised a hand. How many would feel safer with a gun? The response was about the same.

How many knew how to get a gun with a single phone call? The response was nearly unanimous.

One young man explained it this way: If you were arrested, you could still see your family in jail. Not so if you were dead.

Duncan had called this man, a 21-year-old participant in the program who did not want his name published for his own safety, and asked him to tell his story.

Several years ago, the young man said, he bought a 9 mm pistol from an acquaintance for several hundred dollars, only to have another friend take it, fire it at him and leave with it. That friend was later charged with shooting two people to death. This is how it is these days, he said.

“We still want to do better,” he said. “But there’s a lot of things in the way.”

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HEADLINE	08/14 NY restricts family packages to inmates
SOURCE	https://apnews.com/article/new-york-prisons-inmate-packages-53c3729a82c83f90ed5479ea5445f5d0
GIST	<p>ALBANY, N.Y. (AP) — As part of an effort to keep illegal drugs and other contraband out of state prisons, New York is taking away one of the few pleasures of life behind bars: It will no longer let people send inmates care packages from home.</p> <p>Under the new policy, which the state began phasing in last month, friends and family aren’t allowed to deliver packages in person during prison visits. They also won’t be allowed to mail boxes of goodies unless those come directly from third-party vendors.</p> <p>While the rule won’t stop prisoners from getting items that can be ordered online, like a Snickers bar or a bag of Doritos, they will lose access to foods like home-cooked meals or grandma’s cookies.</p> <p>That’s a letdown for people like Caroline Hansen, who for 10 years hand-delivered packages filled with fresh vegetables, fruits, and meats to her husband, who is serving a life sentence.</p> <p>“When I first started bringing him packages, he said he loved avocados. He hadn’t had them in about 20 years,” said Hansen, a single mother of two who works as a waitress in Long Island.</p> <p>“What breaks my heart is, I take for granted having a banana with my yogurt. Imagine never being able to eat a banana?” she added, saying her husband’s prison cafeteria serves bananas once a month, at most.</p> <p>New York had been one of the few states in the nation that still allowed families to send packages to inmates from home. The rule is already in effect in a majority of state prisons.</p> <p>Starting this month, the state prison system is also testing a program where inmates will be blocked from getting most letters sent on paper. Instead, incoming letters will be scanned by computer, and prisoners will get copies.</p> <p>The change is being made to try and head off a trend of people soaking letters in drugs to smuggle them past authorities. Multiple states including Ohio, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska and Pennsylvania, already</p>

photocopy incoming mail to prevent drugs from being delivered to inmates. The federal Bureau of Prisons began a similar practice in 2019.

New York's Department of Corrections and Community Supervision said in a statement that the two new policies are necessary to stop contraband.

Contraband has been smuggled into prisons in a number of ways: books laced with heroin, weapons and unauthorized electronics like phones hidden in packages, and letter mail soaked in drugs like methamphetamine or a synthetic cannabinoid, also known as K2.

When packages are received by a prison, officers remove the items from the box to inspect the items visually or through an X-ray machine. If there is reason for suspicion, officers are allowed to open sealed packages for further inspection.

Those checks, though, aren't perfect, and authorities believe items slip through.

Critics of the package ban questioned its effectiveness, noting that prohibited items are sometimes brought in by corrupt prison staff.

California stopped allowing people to send packages directly to inmates in 2003. Instead, inmates and families can order items through an approved vendor list provided by the state. In Florida, families also aren't allowed to send packages from home.

Prisoner advocates and families of inmates say the package policy is too restrictive — and an added financial burden.

Wanda Bertram, a communications strategist at the Prison Policy Initiative, called prison food a “nutritional nightmare,” and said some incarcerated people rely on care packages to keep a healthy diet.

Relatives of inmates often rely on private vendors like Walkenhorst and Jack L. Marcus Company, which specialize in sending allowed goods to prisoners, but items bought from third-party vendors can be more expensive.

Before his release from Sing Sing Correctional Facility in New York, former prisoner Wilfredo Laracuenté said he was able to order a 35-pound (16-kilogram) package for himself containing packaged cakes, cookies, chips, soaps, shampoo, and some toiletries.

It cost \$230 — the kind of money most prisoners don't have.

“This is going to be the beginning of the end, where they stop everything under the guise of security and contraband,” said Laracuenté, who served two decades in prison for murder and now facilitates workshops that help recently released inmates reintegrate into society. “What they're doing is removing the human component that's very vital and necessary for the reentry process.”

Even before the ban, families often complained that sending packages was unreliable.

Angelica Watson, whose husband and brother are both incarcerated, said she tried to send packages to them monthly, but food items didn't always make it through before they spoiled.

“Most of it was nonperishable items,” said Watson, who lives in Buffalo. “I tried to do fresh, but it wasn't a good idea because they'd hold it in their storage rooms and it would go bad.”

Hansen, whose husband is serving time for killing a cab driver, said having to order goods through vendors that charge “ridiculous prices,” was no solution to the contraband problem.

“My husband basically thinks this is one more way to deprive him of his basic necessities,” Hansen said.

	<p>More than 60 families of inmates sent grievance letters to New York Assemblymember David Weprin, the Democratic chair of the Assembly's Committee on Correction. Weprin criticized the new policy.</p> <p>The package restriction was first introduced in 2018 through a pilot program at three state prisons, where families could only send packages through a list of six preapproved online vendors. It was quickly rescinded by then-New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, because of public backlash and criticism.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Murders, attacks at border stun Mexico
SOURCE	https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/murders-at-the-border-and-attacks-in-jalisco-and-guanajuato-stun-mexico/ar-AA10CyEk
GIST	<p>Dramatic bouts of violence and mayhem in two regions of Mexico this week have left at least 12 dead and dozens of businesses torched, dramatizing the ability of crime gangs to wreak havoc and shatter the semblance of normality almost anywhere in the country without warning.</p> <p>On Friday, hundreds of Mexican troops were dispatched to the northern border city of Ciudad Juárez in a bid to bolster security after a series of apparently random gang attacks across town on Thursday and early Friday that left at least 11 dead— including a popular radio personality and three of his co-workers, and two inmates shot in a prison riot. Assailants armed with guns and Molotov cocktails targeted convenience stores, gas stations, a pizza shop and vehicles.</p> <p>The killings just across the Rio Grande from El Paso came days after roaming bands of criminals hundreds of miles away to the south set fire to dozens of shops, buses and cars, and threw up roadblocks on major arteries across a wide swath of the states of Jalisco and Guanajuato. Among the sites attacked there were some two dozen outlets of Oxxo, a nationwide fast-food, convenience-store chain. Authorities reported one fatality.</p> <p>The dramatic incidents in distinct parts of the country were apparently unrelated: Officials said the bloody prison riot in Juárez sparked the rampage there in acts of retaliation, while authorities blamed the chaos in Jalisco and Guanajuato on cartel leaders outraged about plans to arrest them.</p> <p>The episodes underscored the ability of Mexico's multibillion-dollar criminal underground — outfitted with high-powered arms and flush with cash from drug trafficking, extortion rings, migrant smuggling and other rackets — to create turmoil.</p> <p>Even many Mexicans accustomed to rampant lawlessness were stunned at this week's anarchic images from Juárez and outside Guadalajara, Mexico's second most populous city, in Jalisco state.</p> <p>"The Mexican state has been overrun and can no longer protect its citizens," tweeted Adrián López, director of the newspaper Noroeste.</p> <p>The deaths of the civilians in Juárez seemed especially shocking to many in a nation where people are accustomed to gangland assassinations of rival mobsters, politicians, journalists and others whose work or activism puts them in the crosshairs of criminals.</p> <p>A widely shared belief in Mexico — albeit one of questionable validity — is that people can remain relatively safe if they go about their business while avoiding the criminal element. In his regular Friday morning news conference, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador categorized the attacks on people not linked to criminality as an event out of the ordinary.</p> <p>"This is something that hadn't presented itself before and hopefully won't be repeated, because they attacked the civilian population, innocents, as a kind of retaliation," López Obrador told reporters Friday. "It wasn't just a clash between two groups, but they began to shoot at civilians. ... That is the most lamentable part of this."</p>

In fact, the murders of “innocents” have long been a byproduct of Mexico’s decades-long drug conflict. Many have been collateral victims— killed, for instance, in gang massacres targeting rivals in bars, restaurants, homes and other locales.

Sowing terror via the deliberate targeting of civilians with spectacular outbursts of firepower has also been part of the texture of Mexico’s tumultuous recent history.

“Random acts of violence create chaos and create fear and allow you to gain a tactical advantage over the authorities and your rivals,” said Alejandro Hope, a Mexican security analyst.

Most notorious, perhaps, was the 2008 grenade attack on a crowd gathered in a main plaza to celebrate Mexican Independence Day in the central city of Morelia. At least eight were killed and more than 100 wounded in one of the defining assaults by traffickers in the early days of Mexico’s so-called War on Drugs.

Juárez, with its strategic location along a key cross-border smuggling corridor, has long been a hub of mob mayhem, a place where gangsters strung slain rivals’ bodies from bridges or dumped their beheaded corpses in vacant lots. The so-called birthday party massacre in 2010 left 14 dead at a high school birthday gathering in Juárez.

The systemic failure to bring murderers to justice in a country where most killings go unsolved only adds to the incentive for criminals to target civilians, Hope added.

“If you go after random people in the streets, you should become a priority target for authorities,” Hope said. “But that does not happen. It sends a message [to criminals] that this is a good tactic.”

The latest attacks have intensified an overriding sense of insecurity for many in places such as western Guanajuato state, where rival gangs battle for control of drug-trafficking routes and black-market gasoline, while extorting local businesses.

"There's no government here: Here the narcos are the government," said Rogelio Cornejo Díaz, 54, who runs a fruit and vegetable stand in Celaya, one of the cities hard hit in the rolling attacks late Tuesday and early Wednesday in Guanajuato state. "If the president thinks all is fine and tranquil, he should come here sometime with his wife and children to see for himself."

Violence has ebbed somewhat in Juárez in the last decade, but Thursday’s events demonstrated the enduring power of criminal mafias — both sophisticated, trans-national cartels and lower-level street and prison gangs.

The trouble in the border city began Thursday afternoon in a dispute between rival gangs at a state prison, Ricardo Mejía, Mexico's deputy security minister, told reporters at the president's daily news conference.

Battling each other, Mejía said, were groups known as Los Chapos — apparently linked to the Sinaloa Cartel formerly headed by Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, now imprisoned for life in the United States — and a local prison band known as Los Mexicles.

A riot left two prisoners dead and at least 20 injured, Mejia said. It was unclear what caused the dispute. But authorities said Mexicles members outside the prison went on a rampage, killing at least nine people.

The victims included the four staffers of Mega Radio —shot dead in the parking lot of a Caesars Pizza outlet. It was unclear if Alán González, the announcer, and his three colleagues were random victims or were targeted in one of the world's most dangerous countries for journalists. Also among the dead were two women who apparently succumbed to smoke inhalation after the Rapiditos Bip Bop convenience store (part of the Oxxo chain) was attacked with a Molotov cocktail.

María del Refugio Ramírez, 54, was a longtime employee, and Saira Janet de Santiago Castro, 18, was applying for a job at the store, according to media reports.

Neighborhood residents erected a shrine outside the store Friday.

Another man in Juárez was reported shot dead in his truck on Thursday, while another victim, also male, was fatally shot on the street, authorities said.

The youngest victim was a 12-year-old who was shot at a Circle K store, officials said. He died Friday after doctors were unable to revive him.

Most shops and offices in the border city were closed Friday as many feared a repeat of the violence. Police and army vehicles patrolled the streets.

The dramatic events of recent days sparked a renewed round of criticism of President López Obrador's controversial security strategy.

In seeking election, López Obrador promised to take a more holistic approach to fighting crime. He vowed to reject the militarized strategy of his predecessors and boost social programs for young people vulnerable to joining gangs.

But Mexico's homicide rate has dipped only slightly since López Obrador took office in December 2018, and there is little evidence of a diminution of the power of organized crime gangs.

"We're in a high-violence equilibrium that has become self-sustaining and that government policy is doing very little to change," said Hope, the security analyst.

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HEADLINE	08/14 Arrest: Albuquerque Muslims relieved
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/aug/14/albuquerque-muslims-reaction-murders
GIST	<p>It was a modern-day murder mystery: who had killed four Muslim men in Albuquerque, New Mexico, since November? And was the same person responsible?</p> <p>There were no strong leads initially. Some guessed the murders were hate crimes, maybe by a far-right white supremacist, as fear struck the hearts of the local Islamic community.</p> <p>Albuquerque's police deputy chief of investigations, Cecily Barker, holds a flyer with photos of a car wanted in connection with the killings of Muslim men.</p> <p>Yet now, the prime suspect is one of that tight-knit community's very own, possibly infuriated that his daughter married into the "wrong" Islamic sect.</p> <p>Authorities' theory has sent shock waves beyond New Mexico's largest city, where longtime resident Alaw Aldhilemi couldn't comprehend it.</p> <p>"We have a free country here – why did he do that?" said Aldhilemi, a Shia Muslim who regularly frequents his Sunni friend's cafe. "We don't live in Iraq or Afghanistan. We live in America."</p> <p>Nonetheless, the arrest of suspect Muhammad Syed, 51, offers a slight measure of peace to a community whose members began avoiding going out in the evening when it was unclear whether they might fall prey to a predator on a killing spree. And it also meant the deaths were not ignored, regardless of the victims' national origin or faith, as some – including their loved ones – worried they might.</p> <p>Among those who fretted their relative's death might be forgotten was 73-year-old Sharief Hadi, now the sole owner of Ariana, after his brother Mohammad "Zahir" Ahmadi, 62, was murdered there last year.</p>

The two brothers, originally from Afghanistan but longtime residents of Albuquerque, ran the grocery store and cafe for many years together before their partnership came to a tragic halt, he explained recently as he poured a cup of hot tea.

On 7 November, Ahmadi went behind the store to smoke a cigarette when he was shot and killed.

“This business was his hope,” Hadi said. “He loved this business. He cooked all the time for people. He was perfect.”

Hadi remembers virtually every detail about the day Ahmadi was murdered. He recalls going home early to meet with a friend and seeing Ahmadi napping on a sofa in the cafe before he left – his last memory of his brother. He hasn’t forgotten the terrible chill that coursed through his body when a neighboring retailer called him and told him to check on his store – especially because Ahmadi had never made it home.

When Hadi arrived, an officer told him, “Your brother’s killed himself.”

“I said, ‘What you’re talking about?’” Hadi added, recounting how investigators took his brother’s body before he then tried to wipe up dried blood and brain matter that still remained.

Hadi mourned. He installed a camera behind the store, near where an Afghan woman in a purple headscarf had molded dough into the large flatbread displayed in the storefront.

He commiserated with a neighboring jeweler who identified herself only as Jennifer, a Native American woman with a dark, slicked-back braid who reported Ahmadi’s body to the police and – thoroughly unnerved – ditched plans to publicize her business.

What disturbed her about Ahmadi’s violent death is that “he was ... happy to be here,” she said, adding that he tried to teach her how to make the bread that the store sold. “He had a dream. He worked hard. He worked harder than some Americans.”

Nonetheless, like Hadi, she feared investigators wouldn’t ever challenge the initial officer’s assumption that Ahmadi died by suicide.

That began to change when 41-year-old Aftab Hussein was shot to death less than three miles away from Ahmadi and Hadi’s store on 26 July. Six days later, a little more than four miles from there, 27-year-old Muhammad Afzaal Hussain was shot dead outside his apartment building.

And, hours after attending a funeral service for Hussein and Hussain on 5 August, 25-year-old Naeem Hussain was shot to death in the same general area.

The police couldn’t ignore the similarities among the slayings, and their investigation went into overdrive. All three men were Albuquerque residents from Pakistan. They were unrelated, but they had different variations of the same last name and were killed within just a few miles of each other.

Authorities acknowledged their religious faith and national origin may have made them targets. That ignited rumors of a hate-fueled killing spree that could date back as far as the death of Ahmadi, in a state where hate crimes aimed at race and religion have the highest number of victims among other kinds reported hate crimes.

Even Joe Biden weighed in. The president tweeted that he was “angered and saddened by the horrific killings of four Muslim men in Albuquerque”.

[Police published](#) a description and surveillance pictures of a silver, four-door Volkswagen that appeared to be linked to at least a couple of the slayings as some Albuquerque Muslims locked themselves in their homes or considered fleeing. Crime Stoppers and the Council on American Islamic Relations offered a combined reward of \$30,000 for information leading to the murderer.

Hundreds of tips about the car's whereabouts poured in. On 9 August, [authorities spotted Syed](#) driving that vehicle 100 miles from New Mexico's border with Texas and stopped him. They found bullet casings matching those recovered at the scenes where Aftab Hussein and Muhammad Hussain were killed, along with a gun.

He has been charged in those two murders, though he has pleaded not guilty while claiming that he fought alongside American forces in Afghanistan.

Police have said they continue investigating whether there is reason to charge him with any other slayings.

Detectives say they haven't determined a motive, though they believe those slain were watched and ambushed, something the Albuquerque police spokesperson, Gilbert Gallegos, called "unusual" for these parts.

"Most of the murders tend to be just toward drug sales or road rage," Gallegos remarked."

But the small Afghan community to which Syed belonged eyes him with suspicion.

Though his family is standing by him, Syed has an extensive history of domestic violence, according to newly released police records. His past charges include assaulting his wife, his son and a man allegedly dating his daughter at the time, though prosecutors eventually dropped those cases.

Hadi said he, his brother and their employees had trouble with Syed – a regular customer of their shop – before the spate of killings erupted.

Independent of the charges against Syed, the Alzahra Islamic Center president, Mizan Kadhim, a former Lutheran Family Services caseworker whose organization helps refugees resettle in the area, said he was "shocked and disgusted" by his background.

"When you come to this country, all you want to do is be successful and to live a peaceful life," Kadhim said. "My mind never went to violence."

Kadhim – a refugee himself – wanted to give back to other refugees and the town he called home. He worked with Naeem Hussain at Lutheran Family Services. He said of all the killings in his community recently, that of his former friend and colleague hurt the most.

"It just was like a huge relief for us when they caught [Syed] because the fear in the community was so big," Kadhim added. "But the fear is still here. Some of my community members said they don't know if there's more of them ... We never thought this is going to happen in America."

Kadhim is uniquely positioned to intensely feel the killings' horror. He welcomed Syed when he first arrived in Albuquerque from Afghanistan nearly six years ago – and he did the same for some of the victims.

He often made home visits to check in on Syed and his family when they were assigned to him. But while Kadhim said Syed "was not a nice person", he never expected he would be accused of murder.

Speculation about Syed's possible motives for murder began to surface in news media around the country and from acquaintances. Kadhim said it was well-known that Syed, a Sunni Muslim, was greatly displeased with his daughter for marrying a Shia.

Hussein and Hussain can be Shia surnames, and Ahmadi can be one, too. Community members say they suspect the last names possibly factored into the victim selection, though authorities have not officially confirmed that this was Syed's motive.

	<p>“He was going crazy over it,” Kadhimi added.</p> <p>It’s an explanation that – if true – won’t ever sit well with Alaw Aldhilemi, a Shia Muslim who regularly patronizes the Sunni-owned Yasmine’s Cafe on Central Avenue, Albuquerque’s “Main Street”, sitting on a portion of Route 66, the historic US highway.</p> <p>Aldhilemi alluded to how Islam’s Sunni and Shia sects agree on most of the religion’s fundamentals, and the split essentially comes down to the sides’ beliefs over who should succeed the faith’s founder, the prophet Muhammad.</p> <p>To most of the Muslims in Albuquerque, it’s a distinction hardly worth arguing over – much less killing for, Aldhilemi said.</p> <p>“We’re all Sunni and Shia here,” Aldhilemi added, gesturing at the entire restaurant. “But this guy ... he’s not Shia. He’s not Sunni. He’s like people who don’t have brains.”</p> <p>Meanwhile, Albuquerque’s Muslim community – Sunnis and Shias alike – stood together again on the first Friday since Syed’s arrest, shoulder to shoulder, as the civic plaza reverberated with the weekly call to prayer.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 UK police probe online threat J.K. Rowling
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/business/jk-rowling-salman-rushdie-threat.html
GIST	<p>The authorities in the United Kingdom said on Sunday that they were investigating an online threat against the author J.K. Rowling after she offered support on social media to Salman Rushdie, the novelist who was attacked last week at an event in western New York.</p> <p>Hours after the attack on Mr. Rushdie, who was stabbed roughly 10 times as he prepared to speak at the Chautauqua Institution, Ms. Rowling tweeted her condolences. She first wrote on Twitter, “Horrific news,” then added: “Feeling very sick right now. Let him be OK.”</p> <p>In response, a user with the handle @MeerAsifAziz1 replied: “Don’t worry you are next.”</p> <p>The tweet was later deleted, and the account was suspended by Sunday evening.</p> <p>A spokeswoman for Police Scotland said that the authorities had received a report of an online threat against Ms. Rowling and that an investigation was ongoing.</p> <p>On Saturday, Ms. Rowling, 57, who wrote the award-winning “Harry Potter” books, assailed Twitter for allowing the social media account that lodged the threat to remain active.</p> <p>“@TwitterSupport These are your guidelines, right?” she wrote. “Violence: You may not threaten violence against an individual or a group of people. We also prohibit the glorification of violence...”</p> <p>Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.</p> <p>On Sunday, Warner Bros. Discovery, the entertainment company behind the “Harry Potter” film adaptations, offered a statement condemning the attack on Ms. Rowling.</p> <p>“We stand with her and all the authors, storytellers and creators who bravely express their creativity and opinions,” the company said in a statement, which also offered condolences to Mr. Rushdie and his family.</p> <p>“The company strongly condemns any form of threat, violence or intimidation when opinions, beliefs and thoughts might differ,” the statement said.</p>

	<p>Mr. Rushdie went into hiding in 1989, shortly after the publication of his novel “The Satanic Verses.” The book, which contained fictionalized depictions of the Prophet Muhammad, offended many Muslims, and resulted in a fatwa, or religious edict, from Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran, who urged Muslims to kill the author. In 1998, the country’s president said Iran no longer supported the edict.</p> <p>As Mr. Rushdie prepared to speak at the Chautauqua Institution, a man, later identified by the police as Hadi Matar, 24, of New Jersey, stormed the stage and stabbed him. Mr. Rushdie remains in a hospital in Erie, Pa., and his agent said on Sunday that he was recovering.</p> <p>Mr. Matar has pleaded not guilty in the attack.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Man drives into Capitol barricade, kills self
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/us/capitol-man-shoots-crash.html
GIST	<p>A man drove his car into a barricade near the U.S. Capitol building early on Sunday morning and then died from a self-inflicted gunshot wound, the authorities said.</p> <p>The man, identified as Richard A. York III, exited his car, which crashed at East Capitol and Second Streets after 4 a.m., as it caught fire, the U.S. Capitol Police said in a statement. He fired several shots into the air and then shot himself as officers approached him.</p> <p>Officers did not shoot back, the statement said. No one else was hurt. The authorities said Mr. York, 29, was from Delaware and had a criminal history that included burglary, theft and assault. Details of those past criminal cases were not immediately available and a motive for his actions remained unclear as of Sunday evening.</p> <p>“At this time, it does not appear the man was targeting any members of Congress, who are on recess,” the statement said.</p> <p>The U.S. Supreme Court is also near the barricade that Mr. York struck.</p> <p>Cases of violence directed at public buildings and officials have grown since the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol.</p> <p>On Thursday, a man who tried to breach the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s Cincinnati office was shot and killed by law enforcement officers after a standoff. He had been on the F.B.I.’s radar for months for potential involvement in the attack on the Capitol.</p> <p>A warrant to search for classified material at former President Donald J. Trump’s beachfront home and resort in Florida, Mar-a-Lago, prompted right-wing and Republican figures to warn of potential upcoming violence.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Seattle continuing weekend shootings
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-shot-in-south-seattle-continuing-weekend-of-shootings/
GIST	<p>Two people were shot in Seattle on Sunday, police said, at least the 11th and 12th victims of gun violence in the Seattle area over the weekend.</p> <p>The two latest shootings came about four hours apart on Sunday.</p> <p>The first, reported around 4:30 p.m., happened in the 9200 block of Rainier Avenue South, near the Safeway. A male victim was shot in the arm and had non-life-threatening injuries, said Detective Valerie Carson, a Seattle police spokesperson. No further information on the shooting was immediately available.</p>

The second was reported shortly after 8 p.m. Sunday, near Hamilton Viewpoint Park in West Seattle. One person was reported shot.

On Friday night and early Saturday, [nine people were wounded and one killed in five shootings in Seattle and Renton.](#)

Seattle interim police Chief Adrian Diaz said Sunday afternoon that none of the Friday-Saturday shootings appeared related.

A man and a woman, both in their 20s, were shot in Hillman City late Friday.

Around the same time, four people were shot at a party in Renton's Ron Regis Park.

Just after midnight Friday, a 14-year-old girl was shot in the leg outside T-Mobile Park, after an eruption of gunfire, featuring more than 80 shots fired, from a nearby bar.

Shortly afterward, police say, a man in a car with gunshot damage arrived at Harborview Medical Center, reporting a graze wound to his head.

Just 15 minutes after the Sodo gunfire, a man was shot near Capitol Hill's Cal Anderson Park. He died at the scene, the only death from the weekend spurt of gunfire.

Another man was shot just after 3 a.m. Saturday in the Pioneer Square neighborhood.

On Sunday, five people remained hospitalized at Harborview, after the rash of shootings.

All five had been upgraded from critical condition to serious condition and remained in the ICU, said Susan Gregg, a Harborview spokesperson.

In an interview Sunday, Seattle police Chief Diaz said police look for patterns when multiple rounds are fired.

"We pay attention to every shooting to determine if there's a connection to gang activities, homelessness, youth violence, robberies, etc.," he said. "Right now, all the shootings, it doesn't appear that there's any consistency in any of the shootings."

As he has done before, Diaz described the department's low staffing levels as a crisis.

He said a shooting like the one that happened in Sodo early Saturday, where the 14-year-old girl was shot in the leg, could take almost half of a precinct's resources to respond.

"That leaves us very, very thin," he said. "During the summer months, I'm making sure that on each of the weekends we're doing our best to make sure that we've got enough staffing to hopefully have a visible presence out in the community."

He said police are still investigating at the site where the Sodo shooting began. He said officers had recovered more than 80 rifle and handgun rounds at the scene.

"Those are huge concerns for us," Diaz said. "A shooting like Friday night, when you've got a lot of rounds fired, could have had a lot more victims."

Mayor Bruce Harrell has proposed [spending \\$2 million on recruiting and hiring incentives](#), in a push to add 500 new officers to the police force over the next two years. The City Council is expected to consider Harrell's proposal this week.

"We're in crisis," Diaz said. "We have a staffing crisis."

	Over the past decade, the number of sworn officers at SPD has dropped from around 1,300 from 2013-19 to under 1,000 in 2022, with more than 400 resignations and retirements since 2020. While SPD staffing has been fully funded in that time, the department has struggled to recruit quickly enough to keep up with attrition.
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HEADLINE	08/14 Phoenix police: shooting kills 1, injures 4
SOURCE	https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/14/us/phoenix-arizona-shooting/index.html
GIST	<p>(CNN)One man is dead and four other people were injured early Sunday after a mass shooting ended a late-night party in Phoenix, Arizona, according to a news release from city police.</p> <p>The Gun Violence Archive -- as well as CNN -- defines a mass shooting as any incident in which four people are shot, excluding the shooter. There have been more than 400 mass shootings in the US this year, according to the archive.</p> <p>This latest mass shooting in Arizona took place around 2 a.m. local time, when officers were called to a home near 46th Street and McDowell Road for reports of a shooting -- a scene Sgt. Phil Krynsky with the Phoenix police called "chaotic."</p> <p>Upon arrival, the fire department pronounced a man in his early 40s dead on scene, the release said. Police are waiting to notify the next of kin before releasing his identity, according to the release.</p> <p>The fire department rushed three others -- a woman, a girl and a man -- to a local hospital.</p> <p>The girl had a life-threatening gunshot wound, but the man and woman had non-life threatening gunshot wounds, the release said. A fourth victim, a man, later arrived at the hospital with a non-life threatening gunshot wound.</p> <p>The suspected gunman was also taken to the hospital with a non-life threatening wound, the release said. Detectives later discovered there had been a fight between multiple men during a late-night party before shots rang out.</p> <p>"During the fight, one of the involved males pulled out a gun and shot multiple times into the crowd as he was attempting to run away," the release said. "After the shooting, the man was held down by witnesses until police arrived and took him into custody."</p> <p>The suspected gunman remains in the hospital and it is unknown when he will be discharged, according to the release.</p> <p>The shooting remains under investigation.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 FBI bulletin: 'dirty bomb' threat
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fbi-bulletin-warns-dirty-bomb-threat-increasing-calls-civil-war-after-raid-mar-a-lago
GIST	<p>A bulletin from the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation was sent to law enforcement agencies warning of increased threats following the FBI's execution of the search warrant at former President Trump's Florida estate.</p> <p>In the days since the warrant was executed, the FBI and DHS have seen an increase in "violent threats" against law enforcement, judiciary and government personnel, including a particular threat to "place a so-called Dirty Bomb in front of FBI headquarters," according to the bulletin.</p> <p>"General calls" for "civil war" and "armed rebellion" have also increased in recent days on social media.</p>

The bulletin states that many of the threats include references to the claim that the 2020 election was stolen, in addition to other perceived claims of government overreach.

Several of the threats are specific, according to the bulletin, which states that "the FBI and DHS have identified multiple articulated threats and calls for the targeted killing of judicial law enforcement and government officials associated with the Palm Beach search, including the Federal judge who approved the Palm Beach search warrant."

The bulletin cites an incident on Aug. 11 when an individual "attempted to forcibly enter the FBI Cincinnati field office." The individual, Ricky Shiffer Jr., allegedly fled from the scene when officers responded and then entered a standoff with law enforcement officers and FBI agents. He was shot and killed after the standoff, which lasted six hours.

Agents from the FBI executed a search warrant on Trump's Florida estate on Monday and seized items, which include 11 sets of material that are listed as classified, as well as some that were marked as top secret.

In a post on Truth Social after the warrant was publicly released on Friday, Trump stated that the documents taken by Federal agents were "all declassified."

"Number one, it was all declassified. Number two, they didn't need to 'seize' anything. They could have had it anytime they wanted without playing politics and breaking into Mar-a-Lago. It was in secured storage, with an additional lock put on as per their request..." Trump said. "They could have had it anytime they wanted—and that includes LONG ago. ALL THEY HAD TO DO WAS ASK. The bigger problem is, what are they going to do with the 33 million pages of documents, many of which are classified, that President Obama took to Chicago?"

The National Archives and Records Administration said in a press release that former [President Obama](#) isn't in control over presidential records from his administration.

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HEADLINE	08/15 Iran claims no blame in Rushdie stabbing
SOURCE	https://www.foxnews.com/world/iran-claims-not-involved-stabbing-salman-rushdie
GIST	<p>An Iranian government official claimed Monday that Tehran was not involved in the recent attack on author Salman Rushdie, who was stabbed in New York ahead of a scheduled speech.</p> <p>In Iran's first public comments addressing the assault, the country's Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani said in a briefing to journalists that Iran should not be accused of any involvement.</p> <p>"We, in the incident of the attack on Salman Rushdie in the U.S., do not consider that anyone deserves blame and accusations except him and his supporters," Kanaani said. "Nobody has the right to accuse Iran in this regard."</p> <p>Rushdie was stabbed multiple times before a speech at the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York, on Friday. The attacker allegedly rushed onto the stage and stabbed him. Rushdie underwent surgery at a local hospital.</p> <p>He suffered a damaged liver and severed nerves in an arm and an eye. His agent said he will likely lose the injured eye.</p> <p>The alleged attacker, 24-year-old Hadi Matar, has pleaded not guilty to charges related to the assault.</p> <p>Rushdie has lived under the threat of a fatwa on his life after Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini condemned his book, "The Satanic Verses," as blasphemy in 1989 and called for the author's death. The book was also banned in Iran. A fatwa is a decree from an Islamic religious leader.</p>

	<p>Iran has offered more than \$3 million for anyone who kills Rushdie.</p> <p>Iran's government has since distanced itself from Khomeini's decree, but Rushdie still faced opposition. A semi-official Iranian religious foundation raised a bounty for Rushdie in 2012 from \$2.8 million to \$3.3 million.</p> <p>Kanaani explained that Iran did not "have any other information more than what the American media has reported."</p> <p>The West "condemning the actions of the attacker and in return glorifying the actions of the insulter to Islamic beliefs is a contradictory attitude," Kanaani said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/15 Six Flags Great America shooting: 3 injured
SOURCE	https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/report-of-shots-fired-at-six-flags-great-america-in-gurnee/
GIST	<p>CHICAGO (CBS) -- Two people were hospitalized Sunday following a shooting in the front entrance parking lot at Six Flags Great America in Gurnee.</p> <p>The shooting happened around 7:50 p.m. as the park was closing. Several ambulances were called to the scene.</p> <p>The shots came from a single vehicle in the parking lot that immediately drove away, according to a statement from Six Flags.</p> <p>Two people were taken to the hospital for evaluation and a third person refused treatment.</p> <p>Video circulating on social media shows parkgoers crouched down and hiding where they had been in line.</p> <p>Witnesses say they saw other parkgoers running after shots were fired.</p> <p>"I thought there were fireworks right away. Then we saw hundreds of people running," said Charlie Donda. "'It was pretty scary but we are safe."</p> <p>Charlie was with his friends and ran to the water park to hide. His father, Brian Donda, said his son did the right thing.</p> <p>"They did the right thing and knew what to do. They are home smiling and safe," he said.</p> <p>Nicole Ellsworth was also in the park with her daughter and says the scene was chaotic with people running everywhere.</p> <p>"People were looking for their kids and crying. Officers ran in with guns drawn," she said.</p> <p>She says it was unclear immediately after the shooting if it happened inside or outside of the park.</p> <p>CBS 2's Sabrina Franza spoke with a witness who helped mothers with their strollers inside the park.</p> <p>"It was people running past saying that they were shooting, so I guess they were running from the front to the back. And were just all started running." said Michelle Smith. "People were falling, I'm trying to help people and their kids."</p> <p>Employee Jeffery Cowell helped hide some of the visitors after hearing over the radio to close their buildings and make sure team members and guest were safe.</p>

"Kids crying for their mom, mom crying for their kids. It was an experience that I don't want to happen again," he said.

Police tape surrounds four vehicles that remained in the parking lot.

Six Flags is an amusement park located at 1 Great America Parkway in Gurnee.

Visitors of the park undergo thorough screenings including bag checks and walking through metal detectors before entering the park.

In a statement from Six Flags:

"Six Flags dedicates our greatest amount of time, talent and resources to safety and security.

Layers of preventative measures both inside and outside the park are in place for the protection of guests and team members. We continue to review and enhance our protocol on a daily basis to ensure we are providing the highest level of safety.

Cameras placed in the parking lot and inside the park, uniformed and plain clothes patrols throughout the property, and advanced screening technology allow us to react quickly and provide important information. The park security team is joined by the Gurnee Police Department, who operates a substation at the park. This evening, we are incredibly grateful to our team members who reacted in a professional manner to take care of our guests, and for the Gurnee Police Department for their on-going presence and commitment to Six Flags Great America."

This is the second shooting in a public place where families gather following the [Highland Park parade mass shooting last month](#).

No one is in custody. The investigation is ongoing.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Police: Rushdie attack suspect
SOURCE	https://abcnews.go.com/US/salman-rushdie-attack-suspect-investigators/story?id=88337058
GIST	<p>Law enforcement officials briefed on the investigation into Salman Rushdie's attack told ABC News that "a preliminary investigation into the suspected perpetrator's probable social media presence indicates a likely adherence or sympathy towards Shi'a extremism and sympathies to the Iranian regime/Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps."</p> <p>Author Salman Rushdie was attacked while giving a lecture at an education center, the Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, in southwestern New York, Friday morning. Rushdie was stabbed at least once in the neck and abdomen, after a man ran up on stage and attacked him and his interviewer. The interviewer, Henry Reese, 73, suffered a minor head injury during the attack, police said. He was treated for a facial injury at a nearby hospital and has since been released, police said.</p> <p>Rushdie's agent told ABC News on Friday that he will likely lose an eye, the nerves in his arm were severed and his liver was stabbed and damaged.</p> <p>Law enforcement have identified Rushdie's attacker as 24-year-old Hadi Matar of New Jersey. Matar is currently in New York State Police custody. Matar is charged with felony attempted second-degree murder and second-degree assault.</p> <p>Matar was processed at SP Jamestown and transported to Chautauqua County Jail and will be arraigned on Aug.13.</p> <p>The suspect was born in California, sources told ABC News. On the suspect's phone, investigators say they found photos of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, who was killed in a U.S. drone strike, and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the leader of Iraq's pro-Iranian militia movement, also killed by U.S. forces. Police</p>

	<p>recovered a fake New Jersey driver's license, which appears to have used the suspect's picture with the alias "Hassan Mughniyah," a possible reference to Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Lebanese terror organization Hezbollah, and Imad Mughniyeh, who was the group's No. 2 official before being killed in 2008, sources said.</p> <p>Detectives are now calling the attack an "apparent assassination attempt" by "an individual with strong indicators of ideological support for the Iranian regime." They said the incident occurred during a period of "plot disruptions" apparently connected to the current state of U.S.-Iran tensions.</p> <p>Investigators are noting Iran continues to threaten its enemies around the world as part of its stated play for revenge for the killings of Soleimani and al-Muhandis.</p> <p>Investigators say they do not know, at this point, whether the Ayatollah's prior call to assassinate Rushdie was a motivator. No Iranian official has commented on the attack yet.</p> <p>Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution and a prominent Shi'a Muslim figure, issued a "fatwa," a religious decree, on Feb. 14, 1989, calling for the death of Rushdie and his publishers over his book "The Satanic Verses." Officials stress that the probe is ongoing and information is subject to change. The incident occurred less than 24 hours ago.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Mexico cities under siege by cartel militias
SOURCE	https://www.vice.com/en/article/n7ze4q/mexico-cjng-siege-doble-r
GIST	<p>CIUDAD JUAREZ — Over the past four days multiple Mexican cities faced an onslaught of attacks from drug cartel militias, showing the government's continued inability to stop criminal groups from causing chaos in some of the country's largest cities.</p> <p>The western states of Jalisco and Guanajuato were under siege for around 10 hours on August 9 reportedly after Mexican authorities busted up a meeting between several important leaders of factions of the hyper violent Jalisco New Generation Cartel, or CJNG. The cities of Guadalajara, Irapuato, Celaya and Leon saw numerous cars and buses engulfed in flames to block off traffic arteries, while a reported 25 convenience stores were also set on fire.</p> <p>Rumors swirled throughout the following day about the capture of Ricardo Ruiz, alias "RR" or "Doble R," one of the top leaders of the CJNG in western Mexico. But on Thursday, Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador denied the arrest took place after being pressed by journalists during his morning news conference.</p> <p>He said that 16 people were arrested during the attacks, without providing their identities, "but they [the arrested] are supposed to be influential people, because that is why there was such a strong reaction."</p> <p>The president did not clarify who would have been arrested that caused such a response by the CJNG, and led to speculation in the media that perhaps Doble R was arrested, then released by authorities as a way to appease the assailants attacking the cities.</p> <p>That sort of catch and release under duress by cartel attacks during López Obrador's presidency is not without precedent.</p> <p>In October 2019 Mexican authorities detained Ovidio Guzmán, the son of incarcerated Sinaloa Cartel boss Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, in the city of Culiacán. Sinaloa Cartel associates laid siege to the city in an attempt to pressure the government to release Ovidio Guzmán, who relented, and allowed the younger Guzmán to escape. López Obrador later admitted that he gave the order himself to release Ovidio Guzmán to stop the attacks throughout the city.</p> <p>"These acts are pressure tactics that have worked for the cartels to pressure the government in turn. And it's nothing new," Alejandro Hope, a prominent Mexican security analyst, told VICE World News.</p>

“Criminal organizations don’t really need an enormous amount of people. These kinds of attacks are pretty easy and cheap to carry and they generate huge chaos.”

The aftermath of the incident with Ovidio Guzmán appears to have set a framework for cartels to deal with the president, who came to office with a policy of so-called “*Abrazos, no Balazos*”—Hugs, not Bullets—aimed at reducing violence throughout the country. Criminal organizations appear to have recognized that by causing chaos in the public domain, they can affect the response of security forces.

López Obrador’s denial of the capture of RR came just hours before another large city in Mexico experienced similar attacks.

On Thursday, several men entered the main prison in the border city of Ciudad Juárez. They posed as a visiting family of an inmate and [killed three inmates](#). In the immediate aftermath, hell broke loose around Juárez, which is just miles from El Paso, Texas.

Firefights took place at various places throughout the city. At least 10 people were killed during the attacks, [including a pregnant woman](#) who was burnt alive inside a convenience store and four staff members of a local radio station. Authorities [reported four convenience stores](#) set on fire and [at least one gas station](#).

The fight happened between alleged members of the “Mexicles,” a Sinaloa Cartel faction, and “La Línea,” working for the rival Juárez Cartel, [according to local authorities](#).

López Obrador addressed the [most recent spate of violence](#) in Juárez during his Friday morning news conference, lamenting that “the innocent civilian population was attacked in retaliation. It was not a confrontation between two groups, they started shooting at civilians.”

The president did not explain how he intended to quell the ongoing violence. As López Obrador spoke, most businesses and schools [remained closed](#) as fearful residents barricaded themselves inside their homes.

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HEADLINE	08/14 Australia airport shooting incident; arrest
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/aug/14/gunman-arrested-after-shooting-incident-at-canberra-airport-with-no-injuries-reported
GIST	<p>Passengers have been allowed to re-enter Canberra airport, hours after a shooting incident inside the terminal prompted its evacuation.</p> <p>A man was arrested at the airport after firing as many as five shots inside, some leaving bullet holes in airport windows, about 1.30pm on Sunday.</p> <p>ACT policing said one person was taken into custody and a firearm was recovered after the shooting. No injuries were reported.</p> <p>Police were called to the airport following reports of gunshots. Parts of the airport were locked down while others were evacuated. Planes were grounded.</p> <p>The airport was reopened to passengers before 5pm but flights in and out of Canberra remained grounded.</p> <p>ACT policing said in a statement about 3pm: “[One] person was taken into custody and a firearm was recovered.”</p> <p>“CCTV has been reviewed and at this time the person in custody is believed to be the only person responsible for this incident,” police said.</p>

“The Canberra airport terminal was evacuated as a precaution and the situation at the airport is contained. ACT policing requires members of the public to not attend the airport at this time.”

The man fired shots into the air near the check-in area, witnesses told Guardian Australia and posted on social media. Online footage showed the man then being detained by federal police.

One witness reported hearing “eight to 10” gunshots while others said it was fewer. There were also reports it was chaotic, with people racing out of the terminal “in a stampede”. Police later said about five shots had been fired.

A large contingent of police was at Canberra airport on Sunday afternoon, with armed AFP officers barring the doors. At least a dozen police vehicles were present, with hundreds of people gathering outside the terminal.

One family told Guardian Australia they heard shooting near the Qantas terminal, suggesting up to 10 shots were fired.

“They told us ‘run, run’. It was very scary,” one man, who declined to give his name, said.

ABC reporter Dan Bouchier was on the tarmac at the time and said the plane was held as police did a “security sweep”.

Helen, who was flying to Melbourne with her husband, said she saw a man “shooting in the air” not far from the check-in counter. She described the man as middle-aged, “clean cut” and holding a pistol. She said she heard about six shots.

“Security just said ‘run, run’, so we all ran outside,” she said.

Det Acting Supt Dave Craft said the man entered the airport terminal about 1.30pm and took a seat near the departures area on level two. After about five minutes, the man allegedly removed a firearm and discharged five rounds into the glass windows of the terminal.

Craft told reporters the man did not appear to have targeted any person in the building. He said the alleged gunman was arrested and taken to a Canberra police station. The man had not been charged when Craft spoke to reporters about 3.30pm.

“I just need to reassure people that the airport is safe, that ACT policing have responded, and there is no ongoing threat to the community or to passengers arriving and departing,” he said.

No other details were given of the alleged shooter. Craft said police did not know the man’s motivation but he said the shots were not aimed at anyone and the man did not appear to have any employment or other link to Canberra airport.

Another witness, who declined to give his name, said he was putting his property through the security X-ray machine when the shooting started. Security guards yelled at people to leave their items and run. The man said he was worried about getting his phone and wallet back.

Other witnesses claimed they had heard no announcement or alarm over the airport’s PA system and complained there was a lack of immediate information.

“People just flooded out in a stampede. People were getting knocked over,” one woman said. Another update was expected from the police later on Sunday.

The prime minister, Anthony Albanese, said he had been briefed on the airport incident.

	The finance minister and ACT senator Katy Gallagher said she had been shocked by the event. “Our local airport is such an important part of the Canberra community and it must have been terrifying for everyone,” she said on Twitter. “Thanks so much to the first responders for keeping everyone safe.”
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HEADLINE	08/14 Driver kills 1, injures 17 at Penn. benefit
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/14/us/pennsylvania-crash-fire-fundraiser.html
GIST	<p>In a pair of horrific scenes on Saturday that compounded the tragedy of a recent fatal fire in eastern Pennsylvania, a man plowed his car into a fund-raising event for families affected by that fire, killing one and injuring 17, then drove off and fatally beat a woman before the police arrested him, the authorities said.</p> <p>Four of the injured in the crash in Berwick, a borough about 45 miles southwest of Scranton, were in critical condition late Saturday, said Joseph H. Stender III, a spokesman for Geisinger Medical Center, where many of the victims were taken. The woman was found dead in neighboring Nescopeck, which was the site of the fatal fire on Aug. 5 that tore through a two-story home and killed 10 people.</p> <p>The fund-raiser was meant to benefit the victims and families of the house fire, including Harold Baker, a volunteer firefighter who responded to the fire and ended up losing his 22-year-old daughter and 19-year-old son, as well as six other family members, in the blaze. Among those killed in the fire in Nescopeck were three children, ages 5, 6 and 7, the Pennsylvania State Police said. The oldest victim was 79.</p> <p>In a cruel twist, just eight days after the fire, Mr. Baker responded to the scene Saturday in Nescopeck, where the woman was killed. He said a daughter-in-law and several other relatives had been injured, and an aunt of his daughter-in-law had been killed, in the crash at the fund-raiser. “I haven’t processed the fire yet and now I got to deal with this,” he said.</p> <p>In a statement late Saturday, the Pennsylvania State Police called the crime scenes “very active.” The statement said the suspect had been arrested by local police at the scene of the beating death, and was in state police custody awaiting criminal charges. His name was not released.</p> <p>The crash on Saturday night added another wave of grief to a small community devastated by the Aug. 5 fire that the authorities described as “violent” and “forceful.” The cause of the fire has not been released. At a news conference late Saturday, Trooper Anthony Petroski said the suspect in Saturday’s deaths was not currently a suspect in the fire, according to The Times-Leader of Wilkes-Barre, Pa.</p> <p>Area residents struggled to process what had happened in barely more than a week’s time. The confusion and anger were compounded because there were so many unanswered questions about the fire, Robin Massina, a Berwick resident who is the daughter of the Nescopeck mayor, said in an interview late Saturday.</p> <p>“What is this madness?” Ms. Massina said. “Why is it happening? We’re a small town that probably hasn’t been in the news since the flood of like 1978.”</p> <p>She said that the community had pulled together after the fire, and that she believed enough money had been raised so that families could bury their loved ones and get back on their feet. The event on Saturday demonstrated the community’s spirit, but the violence that followed destroyed the healing process.</p> <p>Before the crash, Lauren Hess, the owner of Intoxicology Department, the bar and restaurant that hosted the benefit, said she had quickly planned the event to help people affected by the fire, according to WNEP, a TV station based in Scranton. Donations from the community had poured in, she said.</p> <p>“I got a call on Friday and I was immediately like, ‘What can I do to help because they are going through so much grief and pain?’” Ms. Hess told the station, adding that she was friends with mothers who lost children in the fire.</p>

	<p>The event had started joyously, with scenes of laughing children, country music and water-balloon fights. “It’s going to be an amazing day!” organizers had posted on Facebook early Saturday.</p> <p>The bar posted a statement late Saturday on Facebook calling the day “an absolute tragedy” and said that it would be closed until further notice.</p> <p>Ms. Massina, the Nescopeck mayor’s daughter, said that the community rarely saw violence “other than your stupid Saturday night bar fights.”</p> <p>“And now it’s devastation after devastation, literally a few days apart,” she said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/14 Israel: gunfire injures 8 outside Jerusalem
SOURCE	https://www.nytimes.com/2022/08/13/world/middleeast/jerusalem-shooting-israel.html
GIST	<p>JERUSALEM — At least eight people were injured by gunfire outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem early Sunday in a shooting that the Israeli authorities described as a terrorist attack.</p> <p>Two victims were in serious condition, one of them a pregnant woman who later gave birth. The police said the gunman, identified by Israeli broadcasters as a Palestinian man from East Jerusalem, later surrendered and was arrested.</p> <p>The shooting compounded tensions in the region less than a week after Israel and Palestinian militants had reached a cease-fire to end three days of fighting over Gaza that left dozens of Palestinians dead, including children as well as militant commanders. It was the most violent militant attack since a surge in Palestinian violence during the spring that killed at least 19 Israelis and foreigners before ebbing in May.</p> <p>The police said the gunman fired at a bus and other passing vehicles on a road that winds around the southern walls of the Old City shortly before 1:30 a.m., before escaping for several hours. The shooting occurred southwest of the Old City’s Jewish Quarter and the Western Wall — and close to the Temple Mount, the most contested holy site in the city, known to Muslims as the Aqsa Mosque compound.</p> <p>After an hourslong manhunt, the police said that the gunman had been arrested and his weapon seized after he presented himself voluntarily to officers. The Israeli public broadcaster, Kan, identified him as a Palestinian resident of Silwan, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem, just south of the site of the shooting, that has experienced long-running friction between its Palestinian residents and a small but growing number of Israeli settlers.</p> <p>Sacred to both Jews and Muslims, the nearby Temple Mount houses the third-holiest mosque in Islam and was the location in antiquity of two ancient Jewish temples that remain important to Jewish identity.</p> <p>In recent months, it was the site of several clashes between Palestinian stone-throwers and Israeli riot police, amid Muslim anger at the Israeli authorities for quietly easing restrictions on Jewish prayer at the site, ending decades of convention that barred the practice.</p> <p>After the attack on Sunday morning, an ambulance service, Magen David Adom, said its medics found two men with gunshot wounds on a bus that had stopped on a road near the Western Wall, one of the last remaining parts of a retaining wall that surrounded an ancient Jewish temple.</p> <p>The responders also found four more men with gunshot wounds at a parking area nearby. A seventh victim, the pregnant woman, was also treated for gunshot wounds and later gave birth at Shaare Zedek Medical Center, a hospital in Jerusalem, the center said. An eighth person was also injured, Kan reported. The United States ambassador to Israel, Thomas R. Nides, said on Twitter that some of the injured people were Americans.</p> <p>All of the victims were conscious and were sent to hospitals for further treatment, but the mother and baby, as well as a Hasidic Jewish man, were in serious condition, Kan said.</p>

Prime Minister Yair Lapid thanked Israeli security forces for their work and said in a statement, “All those who seek our harm should know that they will pay a price for any harm to our civilians.”

Hamas, the Islamist militant group that runs the Gaza Strip, praised the attack but did not claim responsibility for it. The group said in a statement on its website that the attack was a response to the recent Israeli airstrikes on Gaza and a recent Israeli raid on Nablus, a Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank.

The Old City of Jerusalem is frequently at the heart of tensions between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel captured the area, along with the rest of East Jerusalem, from Jordan during the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, and today the country considers the entire city its united capital.

But most of the world considers East Jerusalem occupied territory, and Palestinians hope that the area, including the Old City and its holy sites, will one day form the capital of a Palestinian state.

Tensions frequently flare in Palestinian neighborhoods of East Jerusalem, partly as a result of efforts to evict Palestinians that some [settler leaders say](#) are an attempt to prevent the city ever leaving Israeli control.

There is particular friction in Silwan, now a mainly Palestinian neighborhood that many experts believe was once the biblical City of David — the original capital of the Israelite King David 3,000 years ago. Israeli efforts to [build archaeological and tourism attractions](#) in Silwan, mostly celebrating the area’s ancient Jewish heritage, are perceived by Palestinians as a means of eroding Palestinian claims to the city.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Seattle gun violence: 1 killed, 9 injured
SOURCE	https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/man-fatally-shot-near-seattles-cal-anderson-park/
GIST	<p>At least one person was killed and nine wounded, including a 14-year-old girl, during a surge of gun violence in the Seattle area Friday night and early Saturday.</p> <p>The Seattle Police Department reported four shootings during that time, including one fatality at Cal Anderson Park on Capitol Hill, and Renton police say four were shot — two critically wounded — during an incident at Ron Regis Park, in the 1500 block of Orcas Avenue Southeast.</p> <p>The violence began around 11:30 p.m., when Seattle officers responded to a shooting in the 4200 block of South Orcas Street in Hillman City. Officers found a 21-year-old woman and 27-year-old man with gunshot wounds in an alley. Both were taken to Harborview Medical Center and officers recovered shell casings at the scene.</p> <p>At about the same time, according to the Renton Police Department, four people were shot at a party at Ron Regis Park. Two critically injured victims were taken to Harborview and two with serious injuries were taken by private vehicles to Valley Medical Center and an Auburn hospital.</p> <p>At 12:18 a.m. Saturday, police in Sodo were called to the area near Occidental Avenue South and Edgar Martinez Drive South, where they found a 14-year-old girl who’d been shot in the leg during an eruption of gunfire at a nearby bar.</p> <p>She was among people who ran when the shots rang out, according to police. The girl was taken to Harborview in critical condition.</p> <p>Police say officers recovered more than 80 rifle and handgun rounds at the scene, as well as 12 firearms from private security guards working at the bar, and logged at least four vehicles damaged in the shooting. Shortly afterward, police say, a man in a car with gunshot damage arrived at Harborview, reporting a graze wound to his head.</p>

	<p>At 12:33 a.m., around 15 minutes after the Sodo gunfire, 911 callers reported hearing shots at Cal Anderson Park. Police found a man with gunshot wounds on the sidewalk. Police say several people at the scene performed first aid, including police officers and Seattle Fire Department medics, but the man died there. Homicide detectives interviewed witnesses and are continuing to investigate.</p> <p>Seattle police responded to another shooting in the Pioneer Square neighborhood at 3:17 a.m., finding a man with two gunshot wounds at Third Avenue South and South Main Street. Officers and fire department medics provided first aid and transported the man to Harborview in critical condition. Police collected ballistic evidence nearby but found no witnesses.</p> <p>According to the Seattle Police Department crime dashboard, Seattle has seen 27 homicides so far in 2022. Seattle police reported 42 homicides in all of 2021, 53 in 2020 and 36 in 2019. The most recent King County Firearm Violence Report documented 424 shots-fired incidents for the second quarter (April-June) of 2022, up 18% from the previous five quarters of data, though the total number of victims (99) was down 14%.</p> <p>By Saturday afternoon, five gunshot victims remained at Harborview in critical condition.</p> <p>“We have seen an increase in gunshot wounds this past year,” said Harborview spokesperson Susan Gregg. “It is trauma season, so this is what we see, but there has been a definite increase.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Calif. cities end efforts to cut jail population
SOURCE	https://www.wsj.com/articles/california-efforts-to-reduce-jail-population-during-covid-come-to-end-as-crime-rises-11660361898?mod=hp_lead_pos5
GIST	<p>More than two years after instituting policies to keep more nonviolent offenders out of jail to reduce populations during the pandemic, California’s biggest metropolitan areas are making a U-turn in the midst of rising crime.</p> <p>Los Angeles, San Diego and Santa Clara are among the counties that recently stopped setting zero bail for certain misdemeanors and nonviolent felony offenses.</p> <p>Such pandemic-era policies were separate from broader criminal justice reform moves over the past few years that have included laws limiting the use of bail and new approaches by district attorneys who won office on platforms de-emphasizing incarceration.</p> <p>Those were driven by advocates and lawmakers who said that harsh prison sentences did little to reduce crime and that bail was unfair for people too poor to pay it.</p> <p>The policies instituted at the start of the pandemic, meanwhile, were public-health measures meant to quickly depopulate jails, which were home to numerous outbreaks of the then-new coronavirus. The U.S. jail population plunged 25% in 2020 from mid-2019, to about 550,000, its lowest level in nearly a decade, according to federal data.</p> <p>California made such policies optional in mid-2020, a few months after instituting them that spring. But counties that are home to some of the state’s biggest cities kept the policies in place until this summer, after increases in crime sparked public calls for a tougher approach. In San Jose, Mayor Sam Liccardo said the pandemic jail policies were among the reasons that 43 people were arrested and then released without bail on at least 10 separate occasions between January 2020 and April 2022. Officials of Santa Clara County, which includes San Jose, have disputed his claims.</p> <p>“The zero-bail experiment largely failed,” said Mr. Liccardo, a Democrat. “There is a compelling reason to rethink cash bail to ensure it does not perpetuate the racial and economic inequities inherent in the criminal justice system, but we have seen too many violent and repeat offenders put out into our community without sufficient supervision, drug treatment or constraints.”</p>

Nationwide, jail populations have risen but were 15% below their prepandemic levels as of the end of 2021, according to the Prison Policy Initiative, a nonprofit that advocates for reducing prison populations. Homicide rates have increased nationwide over the past two years, but have edged down in the first half of 2022, according to the Major Cities Chiefs Association.

That has put district attorneys known as progressive prosecutors, in cities including Los Angeles, Chicago and Philadelphia, on the defensive. Former San Francisco District Attorney Chesa Boudin was recalled in June by [voters angry over rising crime](#).

New York City Mayor Eric Adams wants the state to do more and has been drawing attention to examples of suspects who were released and went on to commit other crimes.

“Time and again our police officers are making arrests, and then the person who is arrested for assault, felonious assault, robberies, gun possession, they’re finding themselves back on the street,” Mr. Adams said at a press briefing earlier this month.

Earlier this year, New York state lawmakers [allowed judges to set bail](#) for a greater number of offenses and make it easier to hold repeat offenders pending trial, partially reversing a 2019 law that ended cash bail for most misdemeanors and nonviolent felonies.

Some criminologists have said anecdotes aren’t evidence that bail policies are behind the nationwide rise in homicides. In a study of changes to the bail system in Cook County, Ill., which includes Chicago, researchers from Loyola University found a new policy reducing the use of cash bail didn’t lead to an increase in the percentage of those released who were later charged with a new violent crime. It remained at 3%.

“If the rationale for moving back from bail reform is to reduce crime, I don’t think there’s much evidence to justify that approach,” said Richard Rosenfeld, a professor emeritus at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, who studies homicide trends in the U.S.

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HEADLINE	08/12 ‘Tuba Man’ killer arrested: in retail theft ring
SOURCE	https://mynorthwest.com/3567065/tuba-man-killer-arrested-naked-dumpster-now-charged-as-part-of-retail-theft-ring/
GIST	<p>Billy Chambers, who infamously was charged with manslaughter in the death of the well-known street musician known as “Tuba Man,” is a suspect in an organized retail theft crime ring, according to new details released by Bellevue police.</p> <p>The King County prosecutor charged Chambers with two counts of first-degree organized retail theft along with two others, Memory Yearby and Earnetra Turner. Trey Kendall was also charged with first-degree stolen property trafficking for attempting to sell the stolen items on OfferUp. All four have extensive criminal histories.</p> <p>Police are investigating a series of four thefts, between June 14 and 24, at Louis Vuitton and Gucci stores that they believe Chambers and his associates are involved in.</p> <p>The primary method used by the crime ring, according to the reports, is that Chambers would stay near the door, while Yearby and Turner would grab as much merchandise as possible and flee the scene.</p> <p>Each of their thefts became increasingly bolder, with their first theft only stealing \$5,450 worth of handbags, which then increased to \$38,579 and then \$54,929 and \$58,150 in their final two heists.</p> <p>Security footage and information from store managers are consistent across all four thefts and investigators say they all match the description of Chambers and his associates.</p>

“These suspects were aggressive and coordinated in their efforts and often physically confronted employees or security who stood in their way,” Bellevue PD Captain Shelby Shearer said. “This crew also caused significant damage to the stores during the thefts, causing some businesses to close for the day to clean up the mess.”

Recently, Chambers made headlines when police arrested him for involvement in a drive-by shooting in the Central District.

After a shooting near 27th Ave and East Spring Street around 3:30 p.m. on July 14, Chambers fled in a red BMW, which he later crashed.

Telling bystanders he had been shot in the leg, he was transported to a hospital where he gave a fake name to avoid a warrant for escaping community custody.

He later fled the hospital when police came to question him about the shooting and the two handguns they found at the scene. In a hospital gown, which he later lost at some point in his escape, Chambers evaded police, taking shelter in a dumpster.

Police found him nude and arrested him.

Chambers had previously been convicted of manslaughter when, at 15 years old, he and another teenager were charged with robbing and killing Ed McMichael, a street musician affectionately known as “Tuba Man.” He has also been convicted of five other felonies and three misdemeanors.

Because of his past convictions, he was not allowed to own firearms, and police are investigating whether or not he owned any.

He is currently being held on \$100,000 bail for illegal possession of a firearm and is now expected to be held for an additional \$25,000 bail for his role in the Louis Vuitton thefts.

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HEADLINE	08/12 Man attacks Rushdie on stage at NY event
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/aug/12/salman-rushdie-attacked-onstage-new-york
GIST	<p>Sir Salman Rushdie remains on a ventilator after being attacked on stage at an event in western New York state on Friday morning.</p> <p>Rushdie, the author whose writing led to death threats from Iran in the 1980s, was stabbed in the neck and torso as he was about to give a lecture in western New York.</p> <p>Rushdie, 75, was taken to surgery, and Andrew Wylie, his spokesperson, said in a statement early Friday evening that the author was put on a ventilator and had suffered significant injuries: “The news is not good. Salman will likely lose one eye; the nerves in his arm were severed; and his liver was stabbed and damaged.”</p> <p>Authorities later identified the man suspected of stabbing Rushdie as 24-year-old Hadi Matar of Fairview, New Jersey, who had bought a pass to the event.</p> <p>An Associated Press reporter witnessed a man storm the stage at the Chautauqua Institution and begin assaulting Rushdie as he was being introduced to give a talk to an audience of hundreds on artistic freedom.</p> <p>Stunned attendees helped wrest the man from Rushdie, who had fallen to the floor. A New York state police trooper providing security at the event arrested the attacker.</p>

“A man jumped up on the stage from I don’t know where and started what looked like beating him on the chest, repeated fist strokes into his chest and neck,” Bradley Fisher, who was in the audience, said. “People were screaming and crying out and gasping.”

A doctor in the audience helped tend to Rushdie while emergency services arrived, police said.

Photos taken by an Associated Press reporter show Rushdie lying on his back, with a first responder crouched over him. The author’s legs were being held up above his chest, presumably to keep blood flowing to the heart.

Rushdie’s interviewer, Henry Reese, 73, was also attacked and suffered a minor head injury, police said.

Reese, who co-founded an organization that provides residencies to writers facing persecution, was released from the hospital on Friday and said in a statement that Rushdie was “one of the great defenders of freedom of speech and freedom of creative expression”. He added, “The fact that this attack could occur in the United States is indicative of the threats to writers from many governments and from many individuals and organizations.”

The White House national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, described the attack as “appalling”. He wrote on Twitter: “We’re thankful to good citizens and first responders for helping him so swiftly.”

The assault happened shortly before 11am at the Chautauqua Institution near Erie in western New York state close to Lake Erie, about 400 miles (644 km) north-west of New York City.

Rushdie, author of 14 novels, had been invited to talk about the importance of the US offering asylum for writers and other artists in exile.

Eyewitness reports said that a man wearing a black mask rushed onstage and began to attack Rushdie as he was sitting on the stage. Paula Voell, a retired journalist, told the Buffalo News that it was quickly apparent that an assault had taken place.

“We saw the man race a few steps across the stage and there was horror – the whole audience reacted, and probably 15 spectators raced on to the stage to try to attend to him, or so it seemed,” she said.

Phone footage captured moments after the attack shows audience members scrambling on to the stage to help. Gasps are heard around the auditorium as members of the public immediately evacuate the space.

Jeremy Genovese, 68, from Beachwood, Ohio, a retired academic from Cleveland State University, told the Press Association news agency he arrived at the amphitheater as it was being evacuated and that people were “streaming out”.

He said: “People were in shock, many people in tears. Chautauqua has always prided itself as a place where people can engage in civil dialogue.

“The amphitheatre is a large outdoor venue where people have given lectures since the late 1800s. You need a pass to access the grounds but it is not too difficult get in.”

The New York Post, citing law enforcement sources, described the suspect Matar as being sympathetic toward the Iranian government. At a news briefing late Friday, authorities said a motive for the attack was unclear.

Rushdie’s book *The Satanic Verses* has been banned in Iran since 1988, as many Muslims consider it to be blasphemous. A year later, Iran’s late leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued a fatwa, or edict, calling for Rushdie’s death. A bounty of more than \$3m has also been offered for anyone who kills Rushdie.

Iran's government has long since distanced itself from Khomeini's decree, but anti-Rushdie sentiment lingered.

In 2012, a semi-official Iranian religious foundation raised the bounty for Rushdie from \$2.8m to \$3.3m.

Rushdie dismissed that threat at the time, saying there was "no evidence" of people being interested in the reward. That year, Rushdie published a memoir, *Joseph Anton*, about the fatwa.

Journalists, writers and celebrities reacted with shock and concern. Horror novelist Stephen King tweeted: "I hope Salman Rushdie is okay."

Indian author and political and environmental activist Arundhati Roy told the Guardian: "I am shocked and saddened beyond measure. Nothing can justify this attack."

Close friend Nigella Lawson, the English food writer and celebrity television cook, wrote: "Such shocking news of Salman Rushdie having been stabbed. This is horrific. Am distraught. Please, please let him be ok."

Speaking to the Guardian, Japanese-born English novelist Kazuo Ishiguro said: "He's been incredibly brave through all these years, continuously putting himself on the line for the right to think and speak freely, despite the dangers that never went away. We're hoping and hoping he'll pull through."

The president of France, Emmanuel Macron, tweeted, "For the last 33 years, Salman Rushdie has symbolised freedom and the fight against obscurantism. Hatred and barbarism have just struck him, so cowardly. His struggle is ours and universal. Today, more than ever, we are at his side."

In the US, where Rushdie lives, the New York state governor, Kathy Hochul, told a press conference that a state police officer saved Rushdie's life and that of the moderator.

She added: "He is alive, he has been airlifted to safety. But here is an individual who has spent decades speaking truth to power, someone who's been out there unafraid, despite the threats that have followed him his entire adult life."

Rushdie was previously president of PEN America, which celebrates free expression and speech, and its chief executive, Suzanne Nossel, was among those reacting to the attack.

She said: "PEN America is reeling from shock and horror ... Our thoughts and passions now lie with our dauntless Salman, wishing him a full and speedy recovery. We hope and believe fervently that his essential voice cannot and will not be silenced."

Rushdie found fame with *Midnight's Children*, about the birth of India, which won the Booker prize in 1981.

The author lived in hiding for many years in London under a British government protection programme after Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa calling for his execution over *The Satanic Verses*.

Finally, in 1998, the Iranian government withdrew its support for the death sentence.

He was knighted in 2008.

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HEADLINE	08/13 Iranians react mixture praise, concern
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/aug/13/salman-rushdie-attack-iranians-react-with-mixture-of-praise-and-concern

Iran has reacted cautiously to the attack on [Salman Rushdie](#), with some citizens offering praise for the brutal stabbing, others claiming it harmed free speech, and several senior officials claiming it was a conspiracy to damage Iran's global image.

Nuclear talks between the US and Iran were cited as a reason for the assault, which has [left the acclaimed author on a ventilator in a New York hospital](#). Several state-aligned news organisations, meanwhile, linked the fatwa issued by late Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khomeini to the violent attack 33 years later.

Senior government figures remained largely mute as outrage surrounding the attempt to kill Rushdie continued to grow. However, many pro-regime outlets in Iraq and neighbouring [Iran](#) welcomed the attack, which has been blamed on an American man of Lebanese origin, Hadi Matar.

"Cursed Salman Rushdie is stabbed with a knife in America," said one outlet. "The evil on the way to hell; Salman Rushdie, the renegade author of *Satanic Verses*, was attacked in New York," said a second publication, Khorasan. Another state outlet quoted from a report at the time of Khomeini's fatwa, in which his successor, Ali Khamenei, said: "The imam has fired an arrow and it will not fail until it hits its target. I believe it will hit its target."

In Iraq, a media organisation, Sabreen, which supports all pro-Iranian militias, headlined its coverage with: "Peace be upon you. The revenge of God."

Supportive coverage of the assault spread to Lebanon, where pro-Iranian press was quick to highlight the 1989 fatwa and Rushdie's attempts to lay low ever since, while others endorsed a conspiracy theory that suggested Iran's enemies had attempted to harm its brand.

Mohammed Marandi, an adviser to Iran's nuclear negotiating team, used social media to echo the conspiracy claims: "I will not shed tears for someone who spread hatred against Islam and Muslims for years," he said. "But is it a coincidence that just when we are on the verge of revitalising the nuclear agreement, America makes claims about an attempted assassination of Bolton and then this happens?"

Despite government sentiment apparently in support of what appears to be an attempted murder, few in Iran were prepared to put their names to their comments. "Salman Rushdie and his radical behaviour has always been a suicide mission," said one senior academic. "He was wanted by Khomeini for insulting Islam and whoever did this now has a specific agenda to ignite chaos and tension between Sunnis, [Shias], liberals and conservatives."

A second Iranian, a Kurd, 29, from Sanandaj, said: "Around my community in Iran, I see that the majority are not happy with what happened to him. Personally, I disagree with what happened. I believe in freedom based on sharing and expressing feelings and thoughts, but not to harm others."

In recent years, Iranian officials had attempted to back away from the fatwa against Rushdie, claiming it was no longer a priority. However, many adherents of Khomeini inside Iran and across the Shia Islamic world believed the decree to be binding.

The edict at the time came amid a revolt in the Muslim world at the publication of Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses*, which some believe made blasphemous suggestions about the prophet Mohammed's life.

"I would like to inform all the intrepid Muslims of the world that the author of the book, *The Satanic Verses*, as well as those publishers who were aware of its contents, are hereby sentenced to death," Khomeini said in 1989.

Rushdie had considered his life to still be at risk, despite more than three decades passing. "And he was right," said Haidar Moussawi, a Lebanese Shia living in Dubai. "Such a religious ruling is not delivered lightly. It can't be made to go away."

	<p>A posting on a pro-Hezbollah site said: “Whoever is hostile to us will be caught by the fire of our swords, even after a while.”</p> <p>Reaction also spread to Kuwait, where a senior journalist said: “[Rushdie] should not expect faithful Muslims to respect his right to life when he disrespected the essence of their lives and insulted their sacred symbols.”</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Rushdie attack prompts security questions
SOURCE	https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/aug/13/salman-rushdie-attack-security-chautauqua
GIST	<p>A day after the bloody attack on Salman Rushdie in western New York, questions are being asked about how the perpetrator gained untrammelled access to the event with apparently minimal security precautions.</p> <p>Rushdie, 75, was attacked at 10.47am on Friday, moments after he had sat down on stage in the Chautauqua Institution, a historic community of artists and thinkers about 15 miles south of Lake Erie. The auditorium, which accommodates about 4,000 people, was two-thirds full.</p> <p>The novelist was stabbed several times including in the neck and abdomen. His agent Andrew Wylie said his liver had been damaged and that he was likely to lose an eye, and he remained hospitalized on Saturday.</p> <p>People travelled from around the local area to hear the author speak about the importance of America providing asylum for exiled writers. Many expressed trauma at what they witnessed and expressed concern about the level of security.</p> <p>Paul Susko, a lawyer based in Erie – the town in Pennsylvania where Rushdie is now being treated in a ventilator at UPMC Hamot hospital – told the local news site goerie.com that participants were prevented from bringing in food and drink to the hall but that was all.</p> <p>“There was screening to prevent attendees from bringing in a cup of coffee,” Susko said. He added that “maybe screening for weapons” with wand or walk-through metal detectors “would have been more helpful”.</p> <p>Susko, who came to the event with his son, was sitting in the front row on the side of the stage where the suspect, identified as Hadi Matar, 24, from Fairview, New Jersey, rushed at the author. “There was no security stopping us from getting to the stage,” Susko said. “There was zero security visible around the stage at the time of the attack.”</p> <p>The violent attack was the antithesis of everything that the Chautauqua Institution has stood for since its founding in 1874. Nestled in a tiny town of just 4,000 people on the edge of Lake Chautauqua, a seven-hour drive from New York City, the organization began life as a summer camp for Sunday school teachers and grew into a major hub of cultural exchange and dialogue.</p> <p>Hours after the attack, the institution’s president, Michael Hill, said the site had seen nothing like it in almost 150 years of existence. Audibly shaken, he said: “We were founded to bring people together in community, to learn and in doing so to create solutions, to develop empathy and to take on intractable problems. Today, we are called to take on fear and the worst of all human traits: hate.”</p> <p>Hill confirmed that Matar had a ticket for the Rushdie event “the same way any other patron would have”. He stressed that the institution was open to anyone, as part of its mission of inclusivity.</p> <p>Asked whether there should have been beefed up security with metal detectors present, given the sensitivities around Rushdie, he said: “We are proud of the security we have at Chautauqua.”</p>

Rushdie has been under a fatwa calling for his death since 1989, when the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini issued it in response to his book *The Satanic Verses*, which was castigated as blasphemous.

Although the Iranian regime appeared to distance itself from the fatwa, a bounty for carrying it out has been increased in recent years to more than \$3m.

Discussions were held before Friday's talk between state and local police and the institution, and two police officers were assigned – a state trooper and a local deputy. Eugene Staniszewski of the New York state police told a press conference that law enforcement had met with the institution at the start of the season.

"There were some high profile events they had requested some law enforcement presence be there, and luckily they were," he said.

The governor of New York state, Kathy Hochul, praised the trooper for his actions. "It was a state police officer who stood up and saved his life, protected him as well as the moderator who was attacked," she said.

Rushdie spent almost a decade in hiding after the issuing of the fatwa. He remained under police protection, moving from safe house to safe house every few days.

After many years he began slowly to re-enter society and has for some time lived in the open in New York City. He has explained his stance on his own security with the comment: "Oh, I have to live my life."

The writer attended the Chautauqua talk with no security detail of his own. When asked whether the organizers should somehow have made efforts to filter attendees entering the premises, Hill vehemently disagreed.

"Our mission is to build bridges across difference," he said. "Mr Rushdie is known as one of the most significant champions for freedom of speech. One of the worst things that Chautauqua could do is back away from its mission. I don't think Mr Rushdie would want that either."

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HEADLINE	08/12 Spokane PD drone targeted in mid-air flight
SOURCE	https://www.krem.com/article/news/local/spokane-police-drone-attacked-i-90-freya/293-7824fbb3-fcc2-4f61-a11b-856b0380105c
GIST	<p>SPOKANE, Wash. — Drones have soared in popularity over the years and they've proven to be a useful tool for the Spokane Police Department (SPD).</p> <p>"The community benefits because we're able to find these people, officers benefit because we're not walking into an ambush and the suspect benefits because we're able to use other tools and tactics to come up with a peaceful resolution," SPD Cpl. Nick Briggs said.</p> <p>They also help officers see in the dark when an armed suspect tried to hide in someone's backyard. Officers knew exactly where he was.</p> <p>"Found the suspect hiding, was able to position the officers in a way that they could protect the public but then also begin de-escalation," Briggs said.</p> <p>Back in July, Spokane police were on the trail of a burglar who stole a laptop from a business on South Freya. The suspect darted into the homeless camp and eventually into a tent.</p>

	<p>Police launched a drone and within minutes, a person living at the camp decided to launch his own to try and take down SPD's. The camper's drone flew right toward the SPD drone and rammed it, breaking off a propeller.</p> <p>"Anytime law enforcement is deploying a relatively new technique or tool, there are people that have the opposite interest," Briggs said. "They are trying to avoid being apprehended. They are trying to hinder investigations."</p> <p>Officer were able to arrest the burglary suspect, but now they have an entirely different investigation. Witnesses at the camp told police they knew who was responsible and that he had several drones in his tent. But, when officers searched it, they couldn't find any.</p> <p>The investigation is still ongoing. Cpl. Briggs says to his knowledge, this is the first time anyone has targeted a SPD drone.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Arrests: theft ring targeted car dealerships
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/2-arrested-in-statewide-theft-ring-that-targeted-car-dealerships-bellevue-police-say
GIST	<p>BELLEVUE, Wash. — Two people were in custody in connection with what police described as a bold scam that managed to trick car dealership employees working across the state from eastern to western Washington.</p> <p>Investigators have not yet publicly identified the 29-year-old man and 24-year-old woman who are facing charges for the thefts.</p> <p>The pair was taken into custody after they were found Friday at a Renton hotel, according to Bellevue police. They are suspected of multiple car thefts from car dealerships across the state, police said.</p> <p>Michaels Toyota in Bellevue was the last of several dealerships targeted by the suspects but there were other dealerships.</p> <p>"There are also thefts in Issaquah, Washington and Grant County, Washington where they also during that crime spree rammed a patrol car and eluded police in Moses Lake," said Shelby Shearer, spokesperson for the Bellevue Police Department.</p> <p>Bellevue police said it all started when the pair showed up in a stolen vehicle and asked the salesperson for a CarFax report on a similar one.</p> <p>When the employee returned, both vehicles were gone.</p> <p>"They were brazen on how they conducted a scam," Shearer said. "And it led us to believe there was other stuff going on."</p> <p>After finding the suspects at the Renton hotel, police also located a BMW, a gun, several key fobs, picture identification cards and credit cards.</p> <p>Investigators said everything recovered was stolen.</p> <p>Stuart Cordova, owner of Auto Connections of Bellevue, said his dealership was not targeted but said he has never seen a similar approach to car thefts.</p> <p>"It seems to be the new method of stealing cars," he said. "You know, I've had cars taken before, but not in that manner."</p>

	<p>For potential buyers who want to test drive a vehicle, employees have to check for a valid drivers' license and automobile insurance.</p> <p>And after the arrests, Cordova said more safeguards may have to be done.</p> <p>“When you hear more about this, then obviously, I’m going to be more alert and make sure we’re doing all we can to protect our investments,” he said.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/13 Renton police: shooting in park injures 4
SOURCE	https://komonews.com/news/local/shooting-at-renton-park-leaves-at-least-4-people-hurt-police-say
GIST	<p>RENTON, Wash. — Renton police were searching early Saturday for a suspect after at least four people were shot, with two of them critically injured, when gunfire erupted at Ron Regis Park during some type of large gathering, authorities said.</p> <p>In a post on social media, police said two victims were rushed for treatment to Harborview Medical Center, where they were said to be in critical condition.</p> <p>Two other victims were taken to a local hospital with serious injuries. Information about their conditions was pending.</p> <p>Police said a large group of people were at the park, located at 1501 Orcas Ave., around 12:30 a.m. before the shooting occurred.</p> <p>People have not said what led to the gunfire and they did not immediately provide a description of any possible suspects.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 Thurston Co. ‘massive’ haul stolen property
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/crime/article264444606.html
GIST	<p>A suspicious circumstance call and reports of shots fired this week led Thurston County deputies to arrest a man in connection with what they called “massive amounts” of stolen property.</p> <p>According to a news release from the Thurston County Sheriff’s Office, deputies arrested a 55-year-old Yelm man on Monday, Aug. 8 and booked him on suspicion of multiple felony charges related to the stolen property.</p> <p>Police said other suspects have been identified and more arrests will happen soon.</p> <p>The arrest comes after police received calls on Monday about a suspicious situation and possibly shots fired in the 14700 block of Regal Lane Southeast in Yelm. A freightliner service truck was stolen earlier that day in King County and was tracked to the Yelm address using the GPS system in the vehicle.</p> <p>When deputies arrived on Regal Lane, they located the stolen truck. They received a warrant to search the property and found three other stolen vehicles, along with several illegal or stolen firearms and other stolen property.</p> <p>Some of it stolen items were identified as being from a U-Haul that was stolen a month earlier from an active duty Coast Guard family staying at a Tumwater hotel. Most of the items were recovered and returned, according to the release.</p> <p>Police are continuing to work on identifying other victims and returning stolen items as possible.</p>
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HEADLINE	08/12 OR crime ring \$22M catalytic converters
SOURCE	https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/business/article264437451.html
GIST	<p>Police in suburban Portland, Oregon, said Thursday they arrested a crime ring leader responsible for trafficking more than 44,000 catalytic converters stolen from vehicles on the West Coast since 2021.</p> <p>Detectives said they identified Brennan Doyle, 32, as the leader of the operation and searched his Lake Oswego home last week, along with seven other properties. The detectives seized over 3,000 catalytic converters hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash, a high-end car and jewelry, Oregon Public Broadcasting reported.</p> <p>Doyle and his associates are accused of stealing catalytic converters from vehicles along the West Coast, Beaverton police spokesperson Matt Henderson said. The crime ring was centered around Portland, but spanned multiple Oregon counties as well as Washington state, Nevada, California, Texas and New York, he said.</p> <p>The metals inside catalytic converters can sell for thousands of dollars per ounce. The street value of the parts stolen and trafficked was estimated to be over \$22 million.</p> <p>The crime ring shipped boxes of converters to the East Coast and internationally, Henderson said. Dozens, if not hundreds, of people may have been involved in the operation, he added, but declined to share more details because the investigation is ongoing.</p> <p>Doyle was indicted on 72 different charges, including racketeering, aggravated theft, and money laundering. Police say one of his associates, Tanner Hellbusch of Beaverton, was caught with over 100 catalytic converters in March. He was indicted on 20 similar counts. It wasn't immediately known if they have lawyers to comment on the case.</p> <p>At least 12 other people face charges in connection within the operation, police said.</p>
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